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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS VOLUME

RAJANI PALME DUTT is editor of the *Labour Monthly* and a world-famous Marxist author. He is one of the leading members of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

A. SOKOLOV is one of the most gifted journalists of the younger generation in the Soviet Union.

E. VARGA is well-known Hungarian economist. He edited Lenin's *Imperialism*. At present he teaches economics in Moscow.

RAMESH CHANDRA is the Punjab correspondent of the *People's Age*, organ of the Communist Party. **PREM SAGAR** is a young economist of the Punjab.

A. G. ZVEREV is the People's Commissar of Finance of the U.S.S.R.

A. K. GHOSE is a veteran leader of the Communist Party of India who was attacked by tuberculosis while in the Deoli Detention Camp in 1941. Released in 1942 he is still unwell and wrote this note while convalescing in Ranchi.

ERRATUM

Page 67. Title of the article : For "For A Free and Prosperous Punjab Villages" read "FOR FREE AND PROSPEROUS PUNJAB VILLAGES."

The Peace And The Tasks Of The Democratic Movement

By R. Palme Dutt*

GREAT events and great changes are shaping the world anew. The war has ended in the Far East, where it began fourteen years ago. These fourteen years have been the heaviest ordeal humanity has known, in which the bankruptcy of the old dying social order, erupting in the black barbarity of fascism, endangered the whole future. But this ordeal, which exposed all the poison and filth of the old society, has also called forth all the heroism and sacrifice and invincible strength of the new rising forces which will shape the future. It has ended in a triumph for the peoples over reaction on a scale which, although the battle is not yet finally ended and the victory so far won has still to be completed and made secure, is already decisive for the future of social development.

The end of the war in the Far East has followed closely on the electoral defeat of Toryism in Britain, the formation of the first Labour Government with a parliamentary majority, and the establishment of new democratic governments in Europe. We are entering into new conditions ; the old landmarks are passing ; the great popular forces liberated by victory over fascism are pressing to the forefront. We cannot yet measure the full shape of the new world that is arising from the still smouldering ashes of battle and destruction. But the speed of events, and the magnitude of the new problems and opportunities arises

*From *Labour Monthly* of September, 1945.

ing, makes imperative an attempt to survey briefly some of the factors of the new world situation, no less than of the situation in Britain.

i. From War To Peace - Victory In The Far East

Victory in the Far East came sooner and more suddenly than any preceding plans and calculations of the Allied Command had anticipated. By this quick capitulation, before final defeat, the Japanese war lords evidently hope to preserve their main forces intact. In order to conceal the bankruptcy of all their policies, their propaganda now seeks to attribute their defeat solely to the atomic bomb. The record disposes of this myth of Japanese propaganda. The confession of their bankruptcy and admission of defeat was already established weeks earlier, before any atomic bomb had been dropped, but after the impending entry of the Soviet Union was already fixed with a predetermined date, when the Japanese Government sued for peace and appealed to the Soviet Union to mediate. The governing causes of this bankruptcy were the collapse of Germany in Europe and the resulting isolation of Japan; the overwhelming pressure of Anglo-American sea and air power; and the final checkmate through the Soviet Union entry into the war, already agreed at Teheran with a date fixed at three months after the Nazi capitulation. The atomic bomb, whose use was only decided at the last moment at Potsdam, in reversal of the previous decision of President Roosevelt against its use, and which was evidently fixed with foreknowledge for a date two days preceding the Soviet entry, rather precipitated than caused the final collapse.

CAUSES OF JAPAN'S DEFEAT

Mr. Churchill, in his speech in the House of Commons on August 17, declared :—

It is to this atomic bomb more than to any other factor that we may ascribe the sudden and speedy ending of the war against Japan.

This repeats the familiar line of Japanese militarist propaganda. A more balanced judgment will rather agree

with the analysis of *The Times* editorial on August 16 :—

Already the governing classes, headed by the Emperor, are desperately striving to "save their face" by ascribing defeat to the atomic bomb. Conveniently forgetting their request to Russia to mediate with the Allies before the atomic bomb was used, they now assert that but for this device the "sacred war" would still be pursuing its course. This particular manoeuvre will fail as the Japanese people come to realise that their armed forces were thoroughly beaten, not by any single weapon, but by the massed resources of nations whose sense of justice had been outraged by Japan's own behaviour.

As a correspondent in the same issue of *The Times* noted :—

The assertion that new American bombs have brought the Japanese war to a magic end is a myth. As we know, weeks before the appearance of the atomic bombs, the Emperor Hirohito had already asked Stalin to mediate ; thus openly admitting defeat. In reality, Japan has been brought down by the interruption of her sea communications by Anglo-American air and sea power, and the danger of a Soviet thrust across Manchuria, cutting the Japanese armies in Asia from home.

STRATEGY AND ILLUSIONS

Similarly the *Observer* noted on August 12 :—

It is fairly clear that the knowledge of the Soviet Government's intention to enter the war stopped the Japanese Government from contemplating surrender on the Japanese islands, where they were faced by the consequences of the atomic bomb, while continuing resistance in China, Malaya, Korea, Manchuria, and on some Pacific islands ; it would have been very hard in that case for the Allies to justify the use of atomic bombs against either Shanghai or Singapore, or in Manchuria or Korea.

The atomic bomb is a powerful weapon of destruction, but by no means an all-sufficing strategy for victory. The

same illusions which characterised the Seversky-Disney-Harris theory of victory by air bombing (although the reports before the Kilgore Military Committee of the Senate have since revealed that German production in 1944, despite air bombing, was higher than in any preceding year) have been carried to an extreme plane in relation to the overwhelming destructive power of the atomic bomb. They received typical expression in the announcement of Sir William Beveridge in *The Times* on August 14 that "The atomic bomb has almost certainly relegated all other weapons of modern war—tanks, battleships, guns, rifles and trained conscript masses—to the museum." The fallacy of this notion was pointed out by Rear-Admiral Thursfield in a letter to *The Times* on August 18 :—

The fallacy lies in the assumption that wars can be won by destruction alone. The appearance of the atomic bomb has immensely enhanced man's powers of destruction, so much so that, as pointed out by General Rowan-Robinson, there are very few war institutions in which it can be used at all. It cannot be used against the Japanese armies still in China, if they should prove recalcitrant Once our troops are in occupation of Japan itself, it cannot even be used as it was on Hiroshima and Nagasaki unless we deliberately leave large tracts of Japan unoccupied—and consequently under no surveillance—as atomic bomb targets ; and even so the occupying troops elsewhere in Japan, dealing with a treacherous and entirely untrustworthy people, must be armed with weapons that they can use at close quarters.

The strategic task in war remains "the defeat of an enemy's armed forces." This is important to bear in mind in assessing the sometimes exaggerated claims, often carried to a fantastic point, in relation to the effects of the atomic bomb on strategy and world-power relations.

SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN THE FAR EAST

Soviet participation in the war in the Far East, as agreed at Teheran, is of far-reaching significance, not only for its immediate strategic effect, but for its influence on the whole character of the Far Eastern settlement. It

represents a blow to the designs of reactionary isolationist circles to make the Far Eastern settlement an exclusively American or Anglo-American settlement in place of a United Nations settlement. It increases the favourable factors for a greater degree of reflection of the aims of national liberation in the Far Eastern settlement, especially in the case of the Mongolian, Manchurian and Korean peoples. Further, it ends the duality, previously necessitated by strategic considerations, between the alliance of democratic nations in relation to Europe and in relation to the Far East, and makes the world settlement as a whole now a United Nations settlement.

NO JAPANESE MUNICH

It is of paramount importance that the Japanese militarists shall not be allowed to get away with their bare-faced plans to maintain their essential basis of power untouched, in order to be able to prepare to resume their aggression. This is the key question involved in their manoeuvres to divide the allies and secure the maintenance of the Emperor as the focus of their military-imperial system. Their aims have been still openly proclaimed in the first phase after capitulation. Thus the Political Association of Greater Japan, the fascist party created by the big business and military rulers, issued a declaration boasting that "Japan has been able to end the war with a great reserve of power," and proclaiming the aim to proceed to the re-establishment of "Greater Japan." The Home Secretary proclaimed the aim of "the rapid recovery and growth of the empire." In order that enduring peace may be established in the Far East no less than in Europe, it is imperative that the terms of the Potsdam declaration to Japan be fully and strictly enforced. The Potsdam terms will not have been fulfilled until all war criminals, including the Emperor, have met with "stern justice." The urgency of such measures is stressed by the fact that, as the *Spectator* has noted, "the Japanese get out of the war now with a greater reservoir of armed, undefeated troops, a less damaged industrial potential, than any nation except the United States."

FOR CHINESE DEMOCRACY

Equally the situation in China is causing acute concern to all democrats and opponents of fascism. A democratic China cannot be built by civil war against the Communists. It is intolerable that the reactionary Kuomintang clique should use armies, which have in the main been inactive against Japan, and arms supplied by the allies for use against Japan, to make war on the popular regime in Yenan which, though blockaded and deprived of arms from the allies, has engaged in action two-thirds of the Japanese troops in China. It is still more intolerable that Chiang should directly invite, not only the Chinese puppet quislings in the service of Japan, but the Japanese generals and fascists to maintain their arms for use against the Chinese popular forces. This is a situation of grave concern to all the allies of the United Nations to assist a united democratic settlement in China.

INDIA AND THE FAR EASTERN SETTLEMENT

The reference in the King's Speech to "the early realisation of full self-government in India" needs to be actively followed up with practical steps. The freedom of India, as well as of Burma and Ceylon, must be an integral part of the Asiatic peace settlement. Following the electoral defeat of the Churchill-Amery policies, it is no longer possible to excuse inaction behind the reactionary trick which was operated to defeat the Congress-League agreement that led to the Wavell Plan by substituting the deliberately wrecking formula of "Hindu-Moslem parity." Steps are now needed for the restoration of civil liberty and release of political prisoners, formation of provisional representative governments at the centre and in the provinces, and the holding of elections for a constituent assembly on a broad democratic franchise. This is the special responsibility of the people of this country and the Labour majority in Parliament in relation to the Asiatic peace settlement.

II. The Berlin Agreement And The Settlement Of Europe

The Berlin Agreement is a landmark equally in the development and consolidation of the United Nations and in the peace settlement of Europe. It is the first major post-war agreement of the three leading Powers of the United Nations. Contrary to the predictions that the alliance of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union was only a military wartime alliance which would immediately break asunder after the defeat of the common enemy, the Berlin Agreement has demonstrated the further strengthening and unity of the alliance in the post-war period. The progress from Teheran to Crimea and to Berlin has revealed the logic of the alliance in the advance of the range of concrete agreement, despite the sharp intervening differences. Each agreement has settled a series of big outstanding questions and carried forward the alliance. Each agreement has been followed by new problems, divergences to be settled, or questions of interpretation—duly magnified and exploited by hostile quarters to suggest a breakdown of co-operation. The practical necessity of settlement of the new problems has in turn compelled new conference and new agreement—but each time carrying forward and extending the ground already won enlarging the range of explicit and firmly decided common policy, and bringing that policy closer to the democratic anti-fascist aims of the United Nations.

SETTLEMENT OF GERMANY

Outstanding achievement of the Berlin Agreement is the immediate short-term settlement of post-war Germany—the most dangerous question and the key question, not only for the destruction of fascism, but for the whole future of Europe and the relations of the Great Powers. A dangerous situation had arisen in the first phase after the armistice owing to the divergence of policy between the British, American and Russian zones. In the Soviet zone the Nazis were sternly dealt with, while democratic political parties and working-class organisation were given scope. In the British and American zones Nazi officials were maintained in power, close economic relations resumed between

British and American monopoly interests and their German partners, and democratic anti-fascist expression or working-class organisation was suppressed as "political". On the eve of the Potsdam Conference the preparation of the Hugenberg Plan, at the direct request of the British authorities, for the economic rebuilding of Germany, showed how far this process had gone. The Berlin Agreement has dealt firmly with this situation and established common principles for all the zones. It has speeded up the trial of war criminals and strengthened the measures for the elimination of Nazis from leading positions. It has established the rights in all zones for democratic anti-fascist and working-class organisation and expression, and the beginnings of local elective forms for self-government. And it has established an economic programme for destroying the basis of the big German monopoly interests in heavy industry, the foundation of fascism, and "eliminating the present excessive concentration of economic power as exemplified, in particular, by cartels, syndicates, trusts and other monopolistic arrangements."

GERMAN ECONOMY AND EUROPE

Especially important in the Berlin Declaration is the definite agreement on the economic future of Germany. The main keynote of Nazi propaganda after defeat, expressed through all the usual reactionary pro-fascist channels, City and business expression and their echoes in the democratic camp, has been to insist on the importance of rapidly rebuilding the gigantic industrial mechanism of imperialist Germany. This obviously interested demand of the British and American cartel partners of German monopoly capital (it has been noted as a triumph of Anglo-American pinpoint bombing that amid the general devastation the vast headquarters of the German Chemical Trust have been left intact) has been pressed forward with every kind of publicity and argument: in practical guise, as the most efficient method of extracting reparations; in familiar right-wing guise, as an insurance against revolution; and in progressive humanitarian guise, as the best method of restoring devastated Europe through the flow of goods from a powerful industrial Germany at the centre of Europe. In this way the essential economic foundations of Hitler's

aims of Pan-Europe have been sold to certain sections of the left as "Western European Unity."

COMMON SENSE ON REPARATIONS

The Berlin Agreement has dealt a sledge-hammer blow to these designs for rebuilding German reactionary domination in Europe. In addition to the prohibition of arms production, and the breaking up of the monopolies and cartels, German heavy industry is to be brought down to a level suitable for "Germany's approved post-war peace-time needs." "Production of metals, chemicals, machinery and other items that are directly necessary to a war economy shall be rigidly controlled and restricted to Germany's approved post-war peace-time needs." Plant and productive machinery above this standard is to be removed from Germany and form the main basis of reparations. This is not only a solution of the problem of reparations which replaces the idiocies and hypocrisies of Versailles with plain physical reparation from the plunderers to the plundered. It also ends the problem of the German monopolist industrial octopus spreading its tentacles over Europe, holding back the development of other European countries to maintain them as an agrarian hinterland, and periodically erupting in military aggression to meet its needs of expansion. Instead, it prepares a different path of European economic recovery, with strengthened industrial development of all countries in place of the previous German domination, and a consequent more balanced economy of Europe as a whole, facilitating democratic development. If the Berlin Agreement is firmly carried out, the battle has been won for European democracy.

HOWL OF REACTION

It is not surprising that the Berlin Agreement has been received with a howl from all the quarters of reaction, monopoly interests, Vatican intriguers and their hangers-on. The *Observer* of August 5 foamed at the mouth, denounced Soviet democracy as indistinguishable from fascism, and congratulated Mr. Bevin on his "advantage to be able to speak frankly to Russia without being suspected of Tory prejudice." The *Sunday Express* announced, in a message supposed to reflect Rome opinion, that "the Pots-

dam deal is not liked," and that "there is universal fear that the transformation of Germany from an industrial into an agricultural nation will impede the reconstruction of Europe." Even the tepid welcome of *The Times* editorial found that "the Potsdam Plan does not meet every expectation." *The New York Herald-Tribune* found the project "awesome," and Senator Taft denounced "a dangerous experiment." *The Economist*, organ of the City, with a characteristic admixture of reactionary polish and Vatican sentiments in its recent phase, let drive full tilt, found the plan equivalent to making Germany "an economic slum," threatened Werewolf revival to fight it, and called for a Western European political and economic alliance counterpoised to the Soviet Union :—

A hostile, resentful and impoverished nation, fifty million strong, even without arms, is a certain source of trouble.... The Potsdam settlement will not last ten years, and when it breaks down there will be nothing but the razor-edge balance of international anarchy between civilisation and the atomic bomb.... The Russians' determination to loot Germany.... We may not be able to alter what happens in the Russian zone, but we can at least disclaim responsibility for it. And we can follow our own convictions in the West, where what is left of Germany can be given the prospect, in the fullness of time, of achieving liberty, equality and prosperity within a Western Europe that is conscious of its political and economic unity. (*Economist*, August 11, 1945.)

Neither Hitler, nor Schacht, nor Ribbentrop, could have put it better.

B.B.C. DIPLOMACY

Similary the B.B.C., whose function might have been thought to be to popularise the Berlin Agreement signed by the British Government, or at any rate to allow the case for it to be put, offered the public a hostile Foreign Review after the news on August 13 by Barbara Ward, who followed a line similar to that of the *Economist*, deplored the treatment of Germany by the Potsdam Powers, and drew a picture of de-industrialisation bringing poverty.

disease and a black spot in the centre of Europe, etc. It is evident that the fight for the Berlin Agreement will not be able to count on very ardent support from some official circles, especially in the Foreign Office and State Department, and will therefore have to be the more energetically conducted by democratic opinion.

MR. BEVIN'S SPEECH

One of the most serious aspects of Mr. Bevin's first speech as Foreign Secretary was the attitude to the Berlin Agreement revealed in the criticism of the provisions for the western frontier of Poland as well as his reference to other issues. In general, no attempt was made to present positively the programme of the Berlin Agreement, that is, of the programme of the United Nations, for the destruction of fascism, for the break-up of German monopoly capitalism, and for the political rights of democratic anti-fascist parties and working-class organisation, in reversal of the previous policy pursued in the British and American zones. These great gains of the democratic anti-fascist movement, which would not have aroused Tory cheers, were passed over in silence. The general line, which aroused Tory cheers, was to deprecate any policy of "revenge" towards Germany, deplore the criminal lawlessness of the resistance movements, mix fascist and anti-fascist regimes in one hat as "totalitarian," and urge the formula of "economic reconstruction" as the "primary aim." While the Berlin Agreement turned its attack against Franco Spain, and indicated positive steps towards the conclusion of peace treaties with recognised democratic governments in Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary, Mr. Bevin's speech emphasised the policy of non-intervention in relation to Franco Spain, endorsed the Churchill policy in Greece and the Vulgaris Government, and turned the attack on the democratic anti-fascist governments in Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary. These declarations have naturally been seized upon by Mr. Eden and the Tory press with indecent glee, while they have caused disquiet among Labour supporters.

LABOUR AND EUROPE

A great opportunity opens out before the labour movement and the Labour Government in relation to Europe and the promotion of democratic development and international democratic co-operation. The response to Mr. Attlee's first letter to the Regent in Greece has illustrated this. The Labour victory over Toryism at the elections, which reflected mass dissatisfaction with the reactionary Tory foreign policy associated with Munichism and pro-fascism and the return of the Labour Government in the key ruling centre of London, have given an enormous stimulus to the democratic anti-fascist forces of Europe and the world. It would be undesirable that this great gain should be dissipated by the creation of an impression that British foreign policy will continue to reflect the traditional outlook of the Foreign Office, viewing with a favourable eye the shortcomings of governments based on "respectable" upper class quisling elements which suppress the anti-fascist fighters, while hostile to the new governments based on the democratic anti-fascist movements which deal sternly with the fascists and collaborators. Such an approach does not correspond to the outlook of the labour movement and democratic opinion in this country which won the victory at the elections. It will be for the labour movement and the labour majority in Parliament to see that any such impression is corrected, and to hold policy firmly to the lines of the Berlin Agreement and the anti-fascist programme of the United Nations.

MR. LASKI AND THE WESTERN BLOC

A similar reflection of one of the traditional aims of Foreign Office policy in the recent period has found expression in the campaign conducted by Mr. Laski and the Labour Party delegation to the French, Danish and Norwegian Socialist Congresses to promote the familiar objective, constantly put forward by British reaction and especially sponsored by the arch-reactionary General Smuts, for the formation of a Western European economic and political bloc under British leadership. The sweeping leftward swing throughout Europe has found expression in a powerful drive to working-class unity carrying forward

the already established Socialist-Communist co-operation towards fusion in a single working-class party. Such fusion has already been agreed in principle in Italy, by the vote of the National Council of the Italian Socialist Party, still to be agreed by the Congress, and in Norway, where the proposal is due to come before a joint congress at the beginning of September. The campaign of the Labour Party delegation has been directed to arrest this process of closer unity and fusion into a united working-class party. The defeat of the proposal for fusion at the French Socialist Congress was hailed by the **Daily Herald** as evidence that "British Labour's triumph has had a deep influence." The Labour delegation's campaign has been further directed to promote the aim of the Western European bloc, through the mechanism of the Socialist Parties.

DIVISION OR UNITY

This proposal for a Western European bloc is often put forward as a proposal for "European unity." In reality it is a proposal for the bisection of Europe into two halves, the effect of which can only serve the interests of reactionary German revival. In place of the real unity of democratic anti-fascist Europe, whose essential pillars are the British-Soviet Pact and the Franco-Soviet Pact, it proposes a division into two halves which would enable German reaction once again, as in the inter-war period, to play on the counterposing balance of the two halves in order to rebuild its strength; while in the proposed combination, put forward as the final aim, of Western and Central Europe, Germany would be the strongest dominating force. In this way it reproduces the essential aim of Hitler's "New Europe." Such a proposal is not only contrary to the wishes and interests of the European peoples striving for national independence and development within the framework of democratic all-European co-operation. It is also contrary to the vital interests of the British people, which are not confined to Western Europe, but are closely linked with the Soviet Union in promoting the democratic development and co-operation of all Europe and find expression on the world scale in strengthening the ties of Anglo-

American-Soviet co-operation in the leadership of the United Nations.

III. The Atomic Bomb And World Power Relations

The questions of world power relations have been brought to the forefront by the widespread speculations which have been let loose with regard to the effects of the atomic bomb on strategy and future world development. In general, a great part of the flood of comment on this significant scientific and technical development, and on its prospective influence on the future of humanity, has revealed the bankruptcy of current traditional social theory and philosophy in face of the headlong advance of modern science and technique. Alongside a few utopian speculations, the general tone of current press and public comment has been one of alarm, pessimism, gloomy forebodings, fears of human destruction, moralisings on the inadequate spiritual development of mankind, machiavellian calculations of immediate power advantage, or solemn warnings. The universal paralysing sense, within capitalist society, of lack of social control of the productive forces has never been more powerfully demonstrated.

SHORT TERM CONSIDERATIONS

It is clear that there are short term and long term considerations involved in relation to the new development. The short term considerations turn on the only realised form of the new power which at present exists—the atomic bomb. The long term considerations turn on the prospective future development of the productive use of atomic energy as a new source of power, and its social consequences. Reactionary propaganda endeavours to seize on both aspects for its own advantage. On the one hand, it endeavours to seize on the immediate strategic significance of the atomic bomb, and of the American monopoly of its production to revive the theory of Anglo-American world domination, proclaim triumphantly the possession of a decisive weapon against the Soviet Union, and undermine the basis of Three Power collaboration in the name of the supposed new rela-

tion of forces. On the other hand, it endeavours to utilise the future prospective use in production as a justification to proclaim all old sources of energy as obsolete, and on this basis to decry all proposals for the nationalisation of coal and electricity as out of date and meaningless. Both lines of argument throw more light on the outlook of their exponents than on the real situation.

The premature strategic calculations of the supposed reversal of world relations of power through the American monopoly of the atomic bomb certainly reveal the wishful thinking of reactionary propagandists. "So long as we and the United States have the monopoly of this discovery," proclaims the blissful **Daily Mail**, "the difference in war potential between us and the rest of the world is as if they had not discovered electric or steam power." "It means a great change in world power relations," declares the **Observer**, "it binds Britain and America together as never before. . . . it shifts the balance of power among the Big Three . . . the possession of the monopoly of the atomic bomb makes American-British power predominance, for the time being, a fact." Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons on August 16 found himself "in entire agreement with the President that the secrets of the atomic bomb should so far as possible not be imparted at the present time to any other country in the world. . . . For this and many other reasons the United States stood at this moment at the summit of the world. He rejoiced that this should be so."

Before accepting these simple conclusions entirely at face value, it will be well to bear in mind a few cautionary considerations. In the first place, as we have earlier had occasion to note, the over-simplification of strategy implicit in these assumptions will not bear examination even in the strategic field alone. In the second place, these declarations are made without knowledge of the stage Soviet science has reached in this field; and it has happened more than once before now that reactionary hotheads who have based their confident calculations on the supposed backwardness of Soviet science and technique have had their fingers burned. In the third place, the supposed Anglo-American monopoly is not borne out by the facts; in this respect, Mr. Churchill has correctly referred to an American monopoly :—

The United States is the only country which knows all the details of the atom bomb. (Daily Herald, August 14.)

There emerges one fact that is seriously exercising the minds of engineers in this country. It is that no practical experience or data of its manufacture exists in Britain. (Sunday Times, August 12.)

From this last point certain important conclusions follow.

If this last point may be taken as a correct description of the facts, it follows that the boasted "American-British power predominance" on the basis of the atomic bomb is a myth, and that the position of Britain would be closer in practice to the supposed position attributed by these theorists to the Soviet Union. More than this. The available evidence indicates that, while the general theoretical development underlying the new discovery has gone forward in all advanced countries, the actual process of production requires at present the devotion of enormous resources, as suggested in the declared expenditure of £500 million on its production by the United States. Such an outlay can only be within the reach of the largest, most highly developed industrial States, such as the United States and the Soviet Union. How far is it within the reach of present-day Britain? On the other hand, it is precisely a small densely crowded country such as Britain, or Japan, that is most vulnerable to the atomic bomb, as against the vast and virtually unconquerable spaces of the United States or the Soviet Union. Is it not obvious that the supposed partnership of "American-British power predominance" would turn into the uttermost helpless dependence of this country on the United States, and that the interest of this country lies now more than ever in maintaining the basis of Three Power collaboration and pressing for the international control of the new weapon in the hands of the leadership of the United Nations? The main world political alignment not only retains its validity, but increases its validity in the conditions of the new weapon.

LONG TERM ASPECTS

But it is the long term considerations which are of profound interest for the future and carry the most pregnant immediate social lessons. The old Wilhelm Liebknecht relates in his *Biographical Memoirs of Karl Marx* how Marx in 1850 responded to the portent of electric power :—

Marx ridiculed the victorious reaction in Europe that fancies it had smothered the revolution and did not suspect that Natural Science was preparing a new revolution. That King Steam, who had revolutionised the world in the last century, had ceased to rule, and that into his place a far greater revolutionist would step, the electric spark.

And now Marx, all flushed and excited, told me that during the last few days the model of an electric engine drawing a railroad train was on exhibition in Regent Street. "Now the problem is solved—the consequences are indefinable. In the wake of the economic revolution the political must necessarily follow, for the latter is only the expression of the former. . . ."

That evening I did not get home—we talked and laughed and drank till late the next morning, and the sun was already up when I went to bed. And I did not stay in bed long. I could not sleep. My head was too full of everything I had heard ; the thoughts, surging to and fro, drove me out again, and I hastened to Regent Street in order to see the model, this modern Trojan horse that civilised society, like the Trojan men and women of old, was leading jubilantly into its Ilios in suicidal blindness and that would surely bring on its destruction.

What would Marx and Wilhelm Liebknecht have felt and thought in face of the prospect of the discovery of the means to harness atomic energy ?

TOWARDS SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

Whatever the time required for the further development of the new discovery to its practical use in production, it is obvious today to the dullest that this development must revolutionise all social conditions. The potential release of

limitless power not only opens the way to completing man's mastery of the conditions of his existence, but thereby opens the way to providing such abundance as can ensure the material foundation, not merely for socialism and the ending of poverty, but for the completed stage of communism or unrationed abundance. But it is no less obvious that the indispensable key to realising these possibilities, the vast resources needed for its production, no less than the necessity of control of such a gigantic source of power, all alike imperatively require social ownership. Never has the truth of the Marxist principle been more powerfully demonstrated that with every technical advance the titanic growth of the productive forces becomes more and more manifestly incompatible with the maintenance of the conditions of private ownership. The question is not whether the new power shall be morally or immorally used, as the great part of current comment sagely suggests, but whether it shall be privately or socially owned. The most hard-bitten advocate of private enterprise finds himself faced with the compulsion to recognise the necessity of social ownership of such a decisive power. But this means that, assuming full development (in practice, it is doubtful whether full development is possible save within a society based on social ownership) the decisive source of power in modern society, to which all other forms are subordinate, becomes socially owned, thus governing the general character of the society in question. Thus the new scientific and technical developments powerfully reinforce every lesson of the present period for the necessity of socialism and for hastening the advance to socialism.

Democracy in Eastern Europe

By A. Sokolov*

ATTENTION has already been called in an earlier issue of this journal (*War & the Working Class*, April 15, 1945) to the rather peculiar idea promulgated in the foreign Press that there are two conceptions of democracy: Anglo-Saxon and Soviet or Western and Eastern. For that section of the Press which formerly stolidly and stubbornly denied the existence of any democracy in countries where the political and social system substantially differed from the West-European and American brands, the discovery of these two conceptions of democracy was, in a manner of speaking, a distinct advance. Evidently, the old point of view was no longer tenable. It was in too glaring a contradiction to the facts which have left an indelible impress on the minds of men. The chief among them is the fact that, in the defeat and destruction of Hitlerism—that bitter and mortal enemy of democracy—the decisive role was played by the Soviet Union. The epochal feat of the Soviet Union in saving the world from fascist barbarism dispelled not a few prejudices and misconceptions. It simply became impossible to go on repeating old hackneyed phrases and catchwords, now that they had been shot to pieces by hard facts. A change of front was needed and the upshot was the theory of the existence of two conceptions of democracy.

This theory, which was first advanced in the concluding stages of the war, is attaining wide currency in the period following the termination of the war. But, while it was an advance on what the foreign Press had been writing before, it very soon became evident that this advance was of a very limited character.

"East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet. . . ." The philosophy contained in these words of Rudyard Kipling was at one time designed to justify relations between colonial East and colony-owning West. It is being trotted out again today with a no less transparent practical purpose.

*From the *New Times*, No. 9, of October 1, 1945.

The doctrine that there are two conceptions of democracy, Western and Eastern, is being formulated to provide the criterion by which to judge the political situation which has arisen in various European countries liberated from Hitler's rule. The question is how to assess the present governments in countries of Eastern Europe liberated by the Red Army and how, on the other hand, to assess the regimes established in other European countries where British and American military authorities are installed. The suggestion that democratic ideas differ according to geographical longitude is intended to explain and to justify the criteria applied by the Western politicians.

The point at issue, therefore, is one which concerns matters that demand a common viewpoint and concerted action on the part of the Allied Powers. And the theory of two different conceptions of democracy is intended to explain the numerous difficulties which arise in the field of international policy. The practical purpose of this theory is obvious. It is to bolster up the assertion that there is no real democracy in the liberated countries of Eastern Europe ; that, judged by the standards of the West, the regimes existing in these countries cannot be considered democratic.

How is this thesis supported ? The meagreness of arguments is only too apparent. Notwithstanding the freedom of the Press which, under "Western democracy" allegedly implies opportunity to express the most diverse opinions, you will find, in all the foreign Press which is discussing the question of democracy, literally not more than three or four arguments served up in different variations.

ARE EAST EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS NON-REPRESENTATIVE ?

First, it is asserted that the governments in liberated East-European countries—in Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary—and also in Yugoslavia, are "non-representative." These governments, allegedly, do not enjoy the support of the majority of the population but express the will only of an insignificant minority. Strictly speaking, this is not an argument at all but only a naked assertion unsupported

by any factual evidence. What is more, it not only ignores facts but completely distorts the truth.

Here is a characteristic example. Not long ago the voice of the American radio station broadcast a statement by the United Press to the effect that the Rumanian Government of Dr. Petru Groza is supported by only 5% of the country's population. But one has just to reckon up the membership of mass popular organizations which openly and unreservedly support the present Rumanian Government, and the absurdity of this figure becomes only too obvious. The trade unions affiliated to the General Confederation of Labour which unequivocally support the government have 1,300,000 members. The Farmers' Front, of which Premier Petru Groza is the leader, has a membership of 1,500,000. Political parties belonging to the National Democratic Front—the Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party and that part of the National Tsarist Party which has joined the Front—have a total of no less than 340,000 members. Add to this number other public and political organizations which support the government, and we get a total of not less than four or five million persons. Yet, in the last parliamentary elections in Rumania in 1933, there were 4,380,000 voters. How, from a comparison of these two figures, the figure 5% can be derived remains the secret of the United Press and of all who keep harping on the "non-representative" character of governments in the East-European countries.

In general it should be remarked that, regrettable as it is to all who are not disposed to regard truth as an outworn prejudice, certain official and unofficial champions of "Western democracy" are extremely loose in their handling of facts and figures. Here is another example. Some time ago a statement made round of the world Press that, in the forthcoming elections in Yugoslavia, 60% of the population will be disfranchised. In refutation of this malicious slander, representatives of the Yugoslav Government cited facts to show that, in reality, the number of persons deprived of franchise (for collaborating with the alien invader) represented no more than 2 to 3% of the electorate. Why, it may be asked, does the Press circulate such falsehoods and, what is more, falsehoods regarding an Allied country like Yugoslavia when, sooner or later, the

truth must be out? But the lie about 60% was widely circulated by the Press in all its countless ramifications and by the radio, while the truth about 2 to 3% forced its way only with difficulty into a handful of newspapers.

The agitation over the alleged non-representative character of the democratic governments in a number of East-European countries is indicative of the haughty contempt for the policy which, amid the arduous conditions of the post-war dislocation, these governments are conducting in pursuance of the will of the people and in the interests of the people. After all, the best criterion of the democracy of a government is its policy. One cannot seriously discuss a democracy regime and, at the same time, close ones eyes to the main thing, namely: whom does it serve, for whose benefit does it exist—for the benefit of the people or their most bitter enemies, the traitors and betrayers of people's interests? If this criterion is applied to the governments of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Hungary, all grounds for calling them non-representative simply fall away.

How can the democratic character of governments which have carried out such radical, profound and unquestionably democratic reforms be doubted?

Agrarian reform implies the destruction of the former omnipotence of feudal landlords. The renunciation of oppression of minorities by the leading nation state and proclamation of equality among nations make it possible for peoples who were formerly torn by dissension and bickering provoked by enemies of democracy to live together in peace.

The nationalisation of a number of vital branches of heavy industry undermines the foundations of anti-popular dictatorships, rapacious trust and bank magnates, agents of foreign capital who grovelled at the feet of the Nazi invaders.

The fact that masses of the people who formerly had virtually no say in the direction of their destinies are now taking an active part in political life is an undeniable democratic achievement. The renunciation of the former adventurist foreign policy which made these countries pawns and counters in hands of imperialist cliques signifies a switch over to the democratic foreign policy of good-

neighbourly relations, peace and co-operation with other peace-loving countries.

This popular policy of democratic governments in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Hungary has only to be contrasted with the anti-popular home and foreign policies of fascist-monarchist cliques, which are setting the tone in Greece, to make it clear which of these countries has a representative and which a non-representative government.

It should be borne in mind that profound democratic reforms could not but change the balance of forces in the social, political and economic life of the East-European countries. The excessive influence of feudal landlords and of agents of foreign capital has been undermined. The strength of the masses, on the other hand, has grown. But is this change in the balance of forces contrary to the principles of democracy? Is it not rather the surest guarantee of the consolidation of democracy and of discomfiture to its enemies?

The second argument is that democracy is not purely and simply majority rule but only such majority rule as fully respects the rights, views and opinions of the minority. For where minority opinion is repressed, the argument runs, there can be no real democracy. And such, it is alleged, is the case in the liberated East-European countries.

The howling contradiction between the first and second arguments is at once apparent. Either in Rumania, Bulgaria, etc., the majority is governed by the minority; and, in that case, there can be no question of the opinion of the minority being repressed. Or, the ruling majority in those countries is treating the minority unfairly; but, if that is so, what justification is there for asserting that a regime which expresses the will of the majority people is "non-representative"? Let us, however, examine argument number two on its merits.

In the first place, a democrat cannot plead for respect for minority rights and abstract himself from a consideration of the character of that minority and from the way it gives expression to its views and opinions. For, indeed, whoever demands full freedom of action for minorities and ignores these paramount aspects of the question, is either futilely beating in the air or is allowing himself to fall a

victim to those dangerous sophistries which were, in no small degree, instrumental in helping fascists in a number of countries to come to power by taking advantage of the feebleness, irresoluteness and flabbiness which then characterized democracy in these countries.

This lesson of history is too fresh in our memories to be lightly forgotten. Did not Hitler march unhindered to power with the criminal connivance of the notorious Weimar democracy? Hitler's gangsters were at that time in a minority, but they demanded respect for their "rights" and "opinions" in accordance with principles of democracy over whose head they had raised an axe.

So much for history. But what of today? It would be simply a miracle, if in the countries where fascist and pro-fascist regimes have dominated for years and even for decades, all fascist elements were to vanish completely a day after the collapse of these regimes. Such miracles, of course, do not happen. It was with full consciousness of the realities that the leaders of the Three Powers at the Crimea Conference provided in their decisions for the important and difficult task of destroying vestiges of fascism and Nazism in liberated Europe.

The fascist rump in any country represents, of course, only an insignificant minority. But would anybody seriously suggest "respecting the rights" of this minority who consider it the sole purpose of their being to forcibly seize power and to establish their bloody tyranny over an overwhelming majority of the population? There is such a minority in Poland, for instance, which calls itself *Narodowe Sily Zbrojne*. This "minority" expresses its opinion with the help of grenades, tommyguns and machineguns directed against peaceful rural inhabitants, active members of democratic parties and representatives of the Polish people's government. How would the advocates of the "Western conception of democracy" have such a "minority" treated?

Or take an analogous minority in another country—in Rumania. Fascist terrorist bands were recently discovered which, in deep conspiratorial secrecy, plotted the assassination of prominent political and public leaders of new democratic Rumania. Naturally, these people were isolated from society, tried as criminal offenders and condemned to

various penalties. Is it not obvious that this is the only way to defend democracy against its bitterest enemies? Of course, when the will of the overwhelming majority of the people is being carried out in liberated countries a numerically small—but extremely vociferous and active—minority is bound to be disgruntled.

Criminal fascists and their accomplices are disgruntled at being called to account, at being put in prison instead of being elevated to cabinet posts, as happens in certain other countries. Diehard landlords are disgruntled with the agrarian reform and profiteers with the measures taken against the black-market. Agents of foreign imperialisms are disgruntled with the independent foreign policy. But such disgruntledness on the part of such a minority, far from casting a doubt on the democratic character of the government, only serves as an added proof that it is a government of, for and by the people.

The advocates of the "Western conception of democracy" have an argument; they assert that, in the liberated East-European countries, a "single-party system" exists. But they close their eyes to the fact that what each of these countries really has is a government coalition consisting of representatives of several democratic parties, organizations and groups which had already joined forces in the course of their heroic struggle for liberation from the Nazi invaders. Is it surprising that these parties and groups set such store by the unity won at the cost of such heavy sacrifices on the altar of their joint struggle against fascism? The whole experience of the past teaches democratic liberated countries of Europe that nothing would benefit reactionaries so much as disunity in the democratic camp and that, on the contrary, unity of democratic forces is a sure guarantee of victory over the machinations of reactionaries.

THE "SINGLE PARTY" HOAX

But what do the apologists of the "Western conception of democracy" care about that? With a zeal worthy of a better cause they keep on harping: "Yours is a single-party system"! They make assertions which can only amaze sincere democrats. They claim, for instance, that, in the liberated countries of Eastern Europe, "one

totalitarian regime has been replaced by another." This juggling with the word totalitarian—what has it got to do with the truth? It is one of those typical catchwords which are invented not to explain things but to obscure them. Champions of anti-Communism with their characteristic unscrupulousness use this catchword to put fascist states and the Soviet Union—the most consistently democratic country and the most irreconcilable enemy of fascism—on a par.

Their purpose is obvious. It is, on the one hand, to defame the Soviet Union and, on the other, to divert attention from the fact that the social and economic systems both of fascist countries and of the "Western democracies" have many things in common. We are referring to the activities of the capitalists, the monopolies, trusts, cartels and banks with their expansionist proclivities, to the social gulf between the small minority, the rich, and the great majority, the poor and near poor and the like. It goes without saying that the existence of these common social and economic features does not mean that fascist countries and the "Western democracies" can be bracketed together. But this fact must be borne in mind if we want to uncover the roots of the subversive activities which pro-fascist elements are conducting in the "Western democracies."

The countries of liberated Europe are confronted with big and complex political, economic, social and cultural problems. They can be solved only if all genuinely democratic forces of the people are solidly united. That is why, in these countries, really democratic parties, for which interests of the people are not empty words, prefer to act in concert. The fragmentation of democratic forces in many European countries before the war cost the people dear. Taking advantage of disunion in the democratic camp, small but politically experienced and solidly united reactionary cliques were able, in many cases, to gain the upper hand over democracy. Such was the case in France where reactionaries, acting on behalf of the "Two Hundred Families," succeeded in splitting the Popular Front and paving the way for the disastrous home and foreign policies which, in the end, led to the disgrace of Compeigne and four years of the nightmare of Nazi occupation.

In Czechoslovakia democratic forces on the eve of the

war were divided into a score of different parties ; the trade union movement was similarly split. Democratic disunity was effectively exploited by the Czechoslovak reactionaries who did no little to facilitate Hitler's aggression against that country. Is it then surprising that four parties in Czechoslovakia—the People's Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party and the People's Party—have now united in the National Front ? There are analogous organizations in Bulgaria—the Patriotic Front ; in Rumania—the National Democratic Front ; in Hungary—the bloc of all anti-fascist parties which have formed a coalition government ; in Yugoslavia—the People's Front ; and in Poland the coalition of four parties represented in the Provisional Government of National Unity.

This does not imply that there are no opposition parties and groups in these countries. There are such parties and groups and they enjoy freedom of speech, publish newspapers and take part in the election campaigns. But who is to blame if the masses, made wise by experience, refuse to follow these groups and their leaders ?

This talk of a single-party system is all the more unwarranted when it is remembered that the Anglo-Saxon countries are not particularly distinguished by a superabundance of political parties. In Great Britain, as in the United States, what we virtually have is a two-party system. During the war Great Britain had a Coalition Government which was supported by all parties. But nobody thought of calling this a single-party system. Just before the termination of the war the Coalition fell to pieces, the government was reorganized and became a purely Conservative one and, after the elections in July, the Conservative Cabinet was succeeded by a Labour Cabinet.

We know, however, that the Government party and the Opposition party—which, in England, significantly enough, is known as "His Majesty's Opposition"—hold very kindred views on important national questions and especially on questions of foreign and imperial policies. It will be remembered that the programme enunciated in the House of Commons by Ernest Bevin, the Labour Foreign Secretary, was cordially greeted by the Conservatives—in fact far more cordially than by the Labourites. The Press—especially the Conservative Press—laid great stress on

the "continuity" of foreign policy displayed by the Labour Cabinet.

It was remarked that the Conservative leaders were far more gratified by this continuity than the millions of electors who had cast their votes for the Labour Party in the hope that it would pursue a more democratic policy in foreign affairs too. Facts, therefore, show that the two principal parties in Great Britain are linked by much stronger bonds than might, at the first glance, appear. What warrant is there, therefore, for denying democratic parties in liberated countries of Europe the right to unite their forces in order to tackle difficult problems that confront their respective peoples?

The proponents of the "Western conception of democracy" assert that what the liberated countries of Eastern Europe actually have is a "dictatorship of the Communist Party." They declare that all other parties are only a sort of a democratic stage scenery, since their leaders consist of specially delegated and carefully disguised Communists.

The only semblance of evidence adduced in support of this assertion—which is as malicious as it is absurd—is that many democratic parties have replaced their old leaders by new ones. At the recent Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, for instance, its former leader, Peyer, who refused to co-operate with the Communists and other democratic parties, received an insignificant number of votes. The Congress elected new leaders headed by Szakasics. Analogous processes are to be observed in some other liberated countries.

In Rumania the old leaders of the national Tsaranist and National Liberal Parties—Maniu and Bratianu—have long been Generals without armies. The bulk of their former followers have given their allegiance to other political leaders, among them old ones like the liberal Tatarescu and new ones. In Yugoslavia, Machev, the former leader of the Croatian Peasant Party who co-operated with the German invaders and with their agent Pavelich, is hated by the Croatian peasants. New men have come forward to lead the Peasant Party which is now known as the Croatian Peasant Republican Party. The same thing is going on in some democratic parties of Poland and other countries.

In this state of affairs devotees of "Western democracy"

assume the pose of an irate cleric and, shaking a minatory finger at Continental peoples say, "Follow your old leaders or we will ex-communicate you from the democratic church!" But what has this demand in common with true democracy in home and foreign affairs? Who will deny that one of the elementary democratic rights is the right of every party freely to select its leaders and, if necessary, to replace them by others? After all, the leadership of a party, if it is really a democratic party, cannot be regarded as a lifelong privilege. In the period of the great upheavals Maniu, Bratianu, Macheck and their ilk lost their political capital. By the support they gave to fascism and the German invaders, by their treacherous attitude towards the national liberation struggle of the masses and by their frank speculation on differences arising among the Great Powers, these bankrupt politicians earned the contempt of their peoples. Whoever attempts at this time to foist such leaders on the liberated peoples only sets himself down as one who uses the banner of democracy as a cloak for an anti-democratic policy which implies anything but respect for the will of the people or for the sovereignty of other countries.

At the same time, let it be remarked that the achievements of democracy in the liberated East-European countries do not imply "Sovietization" of these countries as the most unscrupulous reactionary calumniators claim. As we know, these countries retain their former social and economic systems which are based on private ownership of the means of production. Neither agrarian reforms nor measures taken against the black-market, nor the nationalization of a number of factories or even certain branches of large-scale industry, indicate a departure from the social and economic system existing in these countries. As we know, the nationalization of a number of branches of heavy industry is being discussed in England while in France feudal estates were broken up a century and half ago.

In the Soviet Union there is nothing to warrant the existence of several parties, inasmuch as classes with radically differing interests no longer exist in our country. But the situation is different in the liberated countries of Eastern Europe where such classes do exist. There we actually do find several different parties. But who can

forbid them to join forces in fulfilling the will of the masses who regard unity as a cardinal condition for rebuilding their political life on new and more reliable lines?

It should be remarked that an astonishing confusion of ideas is sometimes betrayed in this discussion of democracy. In illustration we might cite an article which recently appeared in connection with the World Trade Union Conference in the French weekly *Volontes*, organ of one of the groups in the resistance movement known as the *Ceux Dela Resistance*. The author of the article is prepared to admit that the Soviet economic system has a number of definite advantages. He writes,

"When we turn to Soviet Russia we find that it is an exemplar of planned economy where private ownership in the means of production does not exist. This system of production was put to the test during the war and proved its effectiveness. Now, when the war is over, and when the Anglo-Saxon world is threatened with the horrors of unemployment, Russia, on the contrary, is marching forward to realize the new Five Year Plan."

In this acknowledgement of the incontestable advantages of the Soviet Union's economic system we find a reflection of the fact that millions of people all over the world ardently wish the economic system of their countries, like the planned socialist economy of the Soviet Union, to be exempt from the unemployment crises and similar miseries. But, while granting the advantages of Soviet planned economy, the author of the article blindly parrots the long-discredited libels of our enemies to the effect that "liberty and democracy" do not exist in our country. After weighing all pros and cons the article expresses the modest desire "to find a synthesis which would combine the economic regime of the Soviet Union with the political democracy of the Anglo-Saxon countries." This reminds us of Gogol's Agafya Tykhonovna who sighed for a lover who would have lips of one of her suitors and the nose of another.

Evidently, the author of this article fails to realize that the "economic regime" and the political system of the Soviet Union constitute an integral and inseparable

whole. For, the Soviet political system, which is anchored in the economic achievements of socialism, not only formally recognizes the democratic rights of citizens but also assures them the material possibility of enjoying these rights by guaranteeing the right to work, freedom from exploitation and from national and racial inequality etc. The Soviet system is, therefore, the highest form of political democracy. It is consistent democracy—which cannot be said of those countries where democracy, being only a formal right to work, is only a dream while many other rights, as far as the majority population is concerned, are purely nominal.

Lastly, it is an unpardonable crime in the eyes of certain champions of the "Western conception of democracy" that the liberated countries of Eastern Europe in their foreign policies have adopted a firm course of friendship with the Soviet Union. It should be stated that, as a rule, this accusation is not made openly. However, the hints are clear enough. In particular there is a disposition to deny the governments of a number of countries the right to call themselves democratic on grounds that, in the opinion of certain interested circles in Britain and America, they are going too far in the matter of economic co-operation with the Soviet Union.

This attitude betrays a hearty contempt for geographical and historical facts. As to geography, one has only to glance at the map to realize the vital necessity for such countries as Rumania, Hungary and Poland of maintaining a close economic contact with their great eastern neighbour. And, as regards history, everybody knows that, in the post-Versailles period, the absence of normal economic relations with the Soviet Union was the result of the malevolent anti-Soviet policy of circles which then ruled the neighbouring countries and that it did a grave injury to the vital interests of the peoples in these countries.

This argument, moreover, testifies to the obvious disregard of the indisputable interests of the Soviet Union which is scarcely calculated to make for lasting co-operation among the Great Powers. What would the authors of the argument say if a protest were raised against close economic ties between, say, Mexico or Canada and the United States or between Holland or Denmark and Great Britain? One must be blind indeed not to realize that the Soviet Union,

which occupies one-sixth of the land surface of the globe, has every right to establish close economic ties with its immediate neighbours in the west and the east.

THE TRUTH ABOUT "WESTERN DEMOCRATS"

How is this blindness to be explained? Light is thrown on this question by certain foreign observers, like the American radio commentator, Steel, for instance, who believes that Anglo-American pressure on the Balkans and on Rumania, in particular, is being exercised under the influence of commercial interests. And perhaps those observers are not far from the truth who profess to detect, in many of the disquisitions in the foreign Press on the subject of democracy, a distinct smell of oil. *Laturquie*, for instance, one of the very few progressive Turkish newspapers, wrote in middle September,

"Why did the English reactionaries immediately pounce on the Rumanian question and play upon it with such astonishing unanimity? The answer to this question is extremely simple and has nothing to do with the professed necessity to protect democracy. The crux of the matter is—Rumanian oil. Anybody who knows anything at all about the interest displayed by Wall Street and the City in the Ploesti oil region will not be surprised at the violent reaction of these circles to the Rumanian-Soviet rapprochement."

That oil trusts regard every problem from the standpoint of their own interests is quite understandable. At the same time there are many who would like to see the "Greek regime" established in all liberated countries. But what has this got to do with democracy? And if reactionaries loudly call for a "firm policy" towards the Soviet Union one need not doubt that what they mean is a hide-bound policy which ignores the enhanced role of the Soviet Union in international affairs. Nor need one doubt that this policy is scarcely likely to earn any laurels for its champions.

Such are the arguments advanced by the proponents of the "Western conception of democracy." As we see, they are not very convincing. Yet they are indicative of definite tendencies which must not be overlooked when analyzing

present-day international affairs. These tendencies are not new. After World War I, be it remembered, these same circles, whose views and opinions are expressed by the present-day enthusiasts for the "Western conception of democracy," readily reconciled themselves to such regimes as that of the butcher Horthy in Hungary or of the Pilsudski adventurers in Poland or of the fascist Tsankov in Bulgaria. Nobody thought of drawing a distinction between the "Western" and "Eastern" conceptions of democracy then. Any anti-popular regime was considered a good one provided it pursued a policy hostile to the Soviet Union.

This was the time when many statesmen of the Western democracies considered it the acme of wisdom to create a *cordon sanitaire* around the Soviet Union. In the West nowadays there is reluctance to recall the *cordon sanitaire*. That is not surprising, for that policy ended in a fiasco and was utterly discredited in the eyes of peoples. Discontent is often expressed abroad when the Soviet Union finds it necessary to give a reminder of these lessons of the recent past. But in this case the discontented have only themselves to blame. For many conceptions of international policy today quite distinctly bear the hallmark of the inglorious post-Versailles policy of the Western Powers.

At the same time, even some of the new notes in the old refrains far from harmonize with the principles of democracy and international co-operation. Take, for example, the persistent campaign conducted in some American newspapers demanding that the United States use its monopoly of the atomic bomb production to extend "American ideals" and the "American conception of democracy" to the whole world. These undisguised appeals for world dominion of one power are usually accompanied by attacks on the Soviet Union which is accused of "power politics" and of "unilateral actions." But the real motives of these plans for the "atomic democracy" are perfectly clear. Walter Lippman, a conservative American journalist, is undoubtedly right when he writes in this connection:

"If we allow fools among us to brandish the atomic bomb with the idea that it is a political argument we shall certainly end by convincing the remainder of the

contradiction with the economic foundation of society. The feudal yoke became intolerable to the peasant. As long as the product taken from him was directly consumed by the landlord and his retainers, the feudal exploitation was confined within comparatively narrow economic limits. There would have been no sense in the landowner exacting from the peasant more than he could consume. But these bounds fell away as soon as it became possible to convert agricultural produce into a commodity. The landlord began to extort from the peasant an ever larger portion of the product of his labour. The plight of serfs grew worse and worse. It is appropriate to recall that it was worst of all in Poland. *Polonia infernum rusticorum* (Poland is a hell for peasants)—it used to be said five centuries ago. In the unbroken series of peasant revolts which mark European history from the XIII to the XIX century peasants strove to break their shackles.

Time and again revolts were brutally repressed. They did, however, undermine the foundations of the feudal rule and paved the way for victory of the bourgeois revolution. As capitalist relationships grew and spread, the attachment of the labourer to the soil became a fetter on the development of productive forces and feudal dependence of the peasant on the landlord disappeared in one country after another.

But it was only where the formal abolition of the feudal system was accompanied by a break up of the big estates that it signified economic and political emancipation of the peasantry. This, for instance, was the result of the French Revolution at the end of the XVIII century. Where, however, the abolition of feudalism was not accompanied by the disappearance of landlordism, there the political power remained in the hands of the landowners. Such was the case in Italy, Prussia, Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Tsarist Russia. The landed nobility, together with financial oligarchs—with whom they were associated—continued to direct the home and foreign policies of these countries. It was the landed nobility that furnished the court dignitaries, ministers of the state, generals and heads of the government service. In the countryside, the local officials, gendarmerie and schools served the interests of landlords. All who represented the authority of the state

over the people were dependent upon landowners or were intimately connected with them.

In Prussia, *Gutsbezirke* embracing all "free" labourers on every large estate, survived down to the present century. In these communities the right of administration, judgment and punishment was vested in the lord. He was the judge in cases to which he himself was a party. It goes without saying that, under the condition of affairs in which all power and all authority belonged to big landowners, democratic rights, as far as the common people were concerned, were purely nominal. In such countries parliamentary franchise, for instance, as far as the numerous rural population was concerned, was largely a farce. The ballot might be "secret" but peasants and agricultural labourers were obliged to vote as the landlords ordered them to.

Even in England, the traditional land of bourgeois democracy, landowners, who are closely interlinked with the big bourgeoisie, have retained considerable political influence even in our day. It was only a hundred years ago that Gladstone said, "The House of Commons is the House of Landlords." And Haxey, in his highly interesting book "The Tory MP" published in 1939 convincingly proves that the Conservative Party is dominated by a small number of families belonging to the upper landed aristocracy. A large proportion of the Conservative members of Parliament and ministers in Conservative cabinets belong to these families. In his pamphlet, "The personnel of the English cabinet from 1801 to 1924", Professor Laski shows that, in the period 1906-1916, out of fifty-one cabinet ministers twenty-five were Peers. The House of Lords is likewise controlled by the landed aristocracy.

The Conservative defeat in the recent parliamentary elections testifies—as more sober-minded Conservative observers themselves admit—that the people are no longer willing to have so large a political influence remain in the hands of a small circle whose conditions of life totally differ from those of the broad mass of the working people and who are remote from their daily cares and interests.

England, we know, is a country which first entered upon the path of industrial development. Agriculture in that country plays a minor role. Different is the position of

economically and politically backward countries. There agriculture is the means of subsistence for an overwhelming majority of the population. It is, therefore, not surprising that in these countries big landowners dominated the social and political life. They were the bulwark of reaction, politically, socially and culturally.

AGRARIAN REFORM BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

It is not fortuitous that the Hitler bloc in Europe consisted almost exclusively of countries where large landownership prevailed. Everywhere fascist parties had intimate ties with big landed proprietors. Mussolini's Fascist Party began its career of brutal violence and terrorism by destroying the agricultural labourers' organizations to gratify the latifundists of northern Italy. In Germany the Prussian junkers played a big part in paving the way for the Hitler regime and for its criminal and piratical war. We need only recall that Oldenburg Januschau, one of the leaders of the junker caste, was directly instrumental in raising Hitler to power by scaring the senile Hindenburg with the assertion that Schleicher was preparing to strike a blow at the Prussian landowners. Spanish fascism, which still survives, rests on the support of reactionary big landowners.

In a word, in all European countries reaction in all its manifestations has the full support of big landowners whom, in its turn, it serves as a reliable defence.

It is not surprising under these circumstances that even after the feudal servitude of the peasant was abolished agrarian reform remained one of Europe's major political problems. Working peasants, who suffered from an insufficiency or total lack of land of their own, never ceased to demand the break-up of big estates. During World War I political leaders in a number of countries promised peasants far-reaching agrarian reforms. But, as often before in history, the landlords deceived the peasants. Only in a few countries where landlords belonged to an alien nationality, as for example in Transylvania, (the Magyars) and in Czechoslovakia (the Germans) was any large proportion of big estates divided up. In a vast majority of cases, however, agrarian reforms undertaken after World War I left the power of big landowners untouched.

Official data show that in Germany, for instance, during the two decades between the two world wars, 79,346 new peasant farms were created and that these received a total of only 264,000 hectares of land. In addition, another 293,000 hectares were allotted for the enlargement of 172,000 existing peasant farms. However, not all the land turned over to peasants was taken from big proprietors. A certain portion was made available by draining marshes and ploughing up waste lands, while some land was assigned from the state domain. The land cut off from big private estates totalled approximately 1,000,000 hectares. Inasmuch as in 1933 big estates in Germany—those over two hundred hectares—represented a total area of 15,800,000 hectares, we see that, in these two decades, only 6% of the land of big estates was divided up. At such a rate of progress it would require 350 years for the abolition of big estates, quite apart from the fact that peasants were constantly losing a part of their land to landlords and banks.

Not very much faster was the pace of agrarian reform in Poland. According to official data (*Statistical Year Book of Poland, 1938*) relating to Poland in her post-Versailles borders, that is, with the inclusion of the Ukrainian, Belorussian and Lithuanian territories seized by the Polish magnates in the period 1918-1937, only 2,500,000 hectares were divided up out of a total of 25,600,000 hectares (exclusive of forests, etc.). As late as 1931, roughly 11,000,000 hectares—43% of the total land—was still in the hands of the landlords who owned over one hundred hectares each. At this rate it would have required about eighty years to abolish big estates.

Even more lamentable was the fate of agrarian reform in Hungary. Nominally, it is true, over 1,000,000 holds (one hold equals 1.07 acres) were divided up. But nearly one-half of this area fell to the share not of the working peasants but officials, clergymen, school teachers, gendarmes and even landlords. The situation was analogous in Rumania.

Furthermore, the agrarian measures undertaken after World War I suffered from this serious defect that, even when peasants did receive land, conditions were such that they were unable to retain possession of it. The peasant

had to pay a high price for the land and heavy taxes to boot. Nobody took the trouble to see that he was supplied with the necessary implements for the cultivation of his land. The manner of distribution favoured the landlord who retained the most fertile and the best located parts of his land, as well as his machines and animals. The purchase price was very high and the terms were so onerous that peasants often refused to take plots when they were offered them. Those who received land were forced to run into debt to cultivate it; they fell into the clutches of usurers and quite often were soon parted from the land they had newly acquired.

We need only cite the case of Germany. In that country 4,060 parcels of land were sold under the hammer in 1935 and 4,510 in 1934. With the exception of a few dozen or so these were all farms of small and medium peasants. In addition, in the period between the two world wars, over thirty thousand peasant allotments were annually sold "voluntarily" (not under distress). But, economically speaking, in a majority of cases these were forced sales because, having fallen into debt, peasants were unable to retain their land.

RADICAL LAND MEASURES OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS

Quite different are the conditions under which agrarian reforms are being carried out today, after World War II, in countries where popular democracy prevails—in Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia. In the first place, in these countries—for the first time in their history—there are governments capable of protecting, and willing to protect, the interests of the people. After World War I, even where formal democratic principles of one kind or another and universal suffrage were proclaimed, the government remained a government of landlords and bankers. Today the democratic governments of these countries represent the broadest sections of the population: peasants, workers, intellectuals, artisans, merchants and manufacturers. This swing towards democracy lays its impress on agrarian reforms.

Agrarian reforms today are all-embracing. In contradistinction to their earlier reforms, when only a very

small portion of the estates was alienated, today, all land belonging to big proprietors, is being distributed among working peasants.

The present agrarian reforms are being carried out in the interests of the peasantry as a whole. That is why a sharp distinction is drawn between the land of the landlords and the land of peasants. The land of the peasant, even if it is more than he and his family can cultivate, remains in his possession, while the land of the landlord, even if it is no larger in area, is alienated.

In carrying out agrarian reform the behaviour, during the period of the German occupation, of those whom it concerns is taken into account. The land of large proprietors who were guilty of treason, collaboration with the Nazis to the detriment of the people is confiscated without compensation. Large proprietors who took part in the fight for liberation and who have definite services to their credit, retain a part of their estates (in Hungary, for example, three hundred holds). In the division of land privileges over others are granted to agricultural labourers and small peasants who distinguished themselves in the fight for liberation from the Germans.

Agrarian reform is being carried out in the interests of peasants—not landlords, as was the case after World War I. Hence, the compensation paid to landlords is not calculated at prices artificially boosted by big monopoly proprietors, but at such as are within the means of the new owners—the working peasants. This means that the peasant is in a far better position to cultivate the land he receives under the present agrarian reform. Payments for the land are incomparably smaller than were those after World War I when the government paid landlords an excessively high compensation and transferred the whole burden to the shoulders of peasants who received the land. Today, not only does the peasant pay the state a much lower price for the land but the payments fall due not immediately upon receipt of land but only after a definite period when he has had time to get his husbandry going.

Democratic governments are also pursuing a radically different policy in regard to supplying peasants with the means of production. This is no longer regarded as a private affair of the individual peasant but as one of the

tasks of the state. Many animals and machines and other means of production were destroyed during the war and occupation. Some types of machines are not adapted for use on small farms. The government is arranging for the manufacture of agricultural machines, farm implements and other means of production for the peasants and is also seeing to it that the available means of production are put to the best use. It also encourages the formation of peasant co-operative associations for the sale of the produce and for the purchase of urban manufactures with the object of precluding or restricting profiteering by middlemen. The government makes it its business to see that cheap credit is granted to peasants receiving new land in order to save them from falling into the hands of usurers. In a word, the government is doing its utmost to promote the prosperity of peasants not only by allotting them land but by every other means at its disposal as befits a government of, by and for the people.

IN HUNGARY

Agrarian reform has radically changed the aspect of a number of East-European countries. The status of the peasant has fundamentally changed. In Hungary, for instance, before the reform 184 proprietors owned 962,000 holds of land, 869 owned 1,360,000 holds, 3,876 owned 1,530,000 holds. Today there are only 13 large farms of about three hundred holds each ; they belong to people who have rendered special services in the fight against the Nazis and their Hungarian underlings. In all, some four million holds of landlord properties have been confiscated with or without compensation.

Of the 661,000 persons who needed land, 504,056 have already received allotments, including 177,790 agricultural labourers, 75,137 farmhands, 33,280 dwarf peasants, 22,934 small peasants and 15,165 rural artisans. The new farms average from 4.5 to 5.5 holds which is sufficient to maintain a peasant family of four to five persons. As a result of the reform the medium farmer now predominates in the Hungarian countryside : in the place of a few thousand big feudal lords the land is now owned by hundreds of thousands of peasants.

IN POLAND

In Poland more than 150,000 families of formerly landless peasants and farmhands will this year be sowing their own land, not of their masters. Over 200,000 small farms have now been considerably enlarged. In all, about 2,000,000 persons counting members of families have received land as a result of the reform.

RESISTANCE TO BREAK-UP OF JUNKER ESTATES

Agrarian reform in Germany is a special question. The decision of the Berlin Tripartite Conference relating to the economic principles to be applied to Germany states that at the earliest practicable date German economy shall be decentralized for the purpose of eliminating the present excessive concentration of cartels, syndicates, trusts and other monopolistic arrangements.

After the monopolistic organizations the big estates are, without doubt, politically the most influential concentrations of economic power in Germany.

The aim set by the United Nations of completely eradicating fascism and Nazism calls for the destruction of the economic foundations of fascist barbarism, and one of the most important of these is the **junker** estates. In the territories which have passed to the Polish Republic big **German** **junker** estates are being abolished. But in territories remaining to Germany they represent a big and dangerous reactionary force, the destruction of which is one of the essential conditions for the future democratization of Germany. Together with the monopolistic financial oligarchy the **junker** landlords were real masters of Hitler Germany. They have always been protagonists of predatory German aggression and the main prop of misanthropic chauvinistic ideology. Big feudal estates were strongholds of German militarism.

It is, therefore, not without reason that democratic anti-fascist elements in Germany are now urging the necessity of agrarian reform for the purpose, on the one hand, of destroying the major economic bulwark of fascism and reaction and, on the other, of satisfying the land needs of peasants and of the Germans repatriated from neighbouring countries. It need only be mentioned that, in the

province of Brandenburg, one-third of all arable land is held by big landlords. Of the 106,768 hectares of arable land in the district of Prenzlau, 71,308 hectares belong to large proprietors. The landlords are sabotaging; in this district, for example, 32% of the arable land remained unsown this year.

There can be no place in the new democratic Germany for feudal landlordism and the junker caste which constitute the backbone of Prussian militarism. Agrarian reform is one of the essential conditions for genuine and lasting democratization of the country. At the same time, the abolition of big feudal estates of the German junkers will be a serious blow to the forces of reaction all over the world.

Naturally enough, big landowners are not disposed to reconcile themselves to the loss of their age-old rule. True, they constitute too small a minority of the population to start a fight single-handed against the democratic governments of the peoples. But they are not alone. They have the backing of reactionary forces in all countries. They have open and concealed followers in practically every stratum of the population. They have followers among big urban proprietors with whom they are linked by partnership in industrial, commercial and banking firms or by family ties. There are protectors of the landlords' interests in the government service whose officials largely come from big landowning families or are linked with them by material interests. Lastly, the landlords have their agents among the upper strata of the countryside.

Fight against agrarian reform is being waged by every conceivable means. Certain agricultural "experts" allege that the break-up of big estates will result in the decline of agriculture. Agents of landlords try to discourage poor peasants and agricultural labourers from having anything to do with the agrarian reforms by threatening them with vengeance of the landlords in future. Officials who served in the old government administration are trying to delay the realization of the reforms, hoping that a political change will supervene.

BASIS OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

Fight against agrarian reform often assumes the form of bitter political struggle. The former Polish Exile "Government", for instance, took up cudgels for the big latifundia, fought the Polish Provisional Government and stirred up nationalistic and chauvinistic feeling by fascist demagogic, assassination of Polish patriots, etc.

On the other hand, in carrying out the agrarian reform millions of peasants and agricultural labourers have been drawn into the political life for the first time. This means that the broad democratic sections of the countries which were hitherto under the sway of landlords are awakening and organizing. Thousands of rural committees were set up to assist democratic governments in carrying out the agrarian reform and to counteract the forces of reaction. Agrarian reform on an all-embracing scale means the final abolition of the age-old rule of the landlords. This is an earnest consolidation of the new democratic regimes in countries of Eastern and Central Europe in which, even the restricted formal democracy that has long existed in other countries, was hitherto unknown and which were under the naked or barely concealed sway of reaction backed by big landlords.

On the other hand, the satisfaction of millions of peasants' land hunger strikingly indicates the progressive nature of democratic regimes in liberated countries of Eastern Europe. So tangible an achievement of democracy as the abolition of feudal landownership and allotment of land to the broad mass of the peasantry will weigh more in the scales of history than those numerous abstract effusions on the subject of democracy with which a certain section of the foreign Press is filled. As to the accusation of "totalitarianism" sometimes levelled at the popular democratic forces in liberated countries the time is not far off when this charge will only be regarded as an astonishing result of blindness. Agrarian reforms, on the other hand, will always remain an important chapter in the history of European progress and European democracy.

Agrarian reform in a number of European countries is one of the most valuable sequels of World War II in which freedom-loving peoples crushed the fascist enslavers. It

is an essential condition for the growth and consolidation of popular democracy in these countries and a major factor in guaranteeing the liberty of and peace among nations.

Kuomintang-Communist Negotiations In China

By Our Chungking Correspondent

[We give below the full text of the communique issued by the members of the Kuomintang and Communist Parties who participated in the unity discussions between the two parties, during September. After each item in the communique, our Chungking Correspondent has given his comment—and the truth of the criticism he has made of the double-faced and dubious policy of the Kuomintang leadership has been proved to the hilt by the events that have taken place in China since he wrote in the middle of October.—Editor.]

PRESIDENT CHIANG KAI-SHEK of the National Government of China, on the victorious conclusion of the war of resistance, invited Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, to discuss with him the future of the nation. Mr. Mao went to Chungking on the 28th of August to meet President Chiang and they have since had many talks together. Additional representatives came from both sides. On the Government side there were Wang Shih-chieh, Chang Chun, Chang Chih-chung and Shao Li-tze, while from the Communists' side came Chou En-lai and Wang Jo-fei. The talks were conducted in a cordial and friendly atmosphere and the following results have already been achieved. Negotiations for a complete and final solution are continuing on a basis of mutual trust and concessions.

I. A BASIC POLICY FOR PEACEFUL RECONSTRUCTION: Regarding a basic policy for the reconstruction of the nation, it was unanimously agreed that with the victorious conclusion of the war of resistance, a new period of peaceful reconstruction is about to commence. Based on peace, democracy, and unity and under the leadership of President Chiang Kai-shek, long-term co-operation must be maintained, civil war resolutely avoided, an independent and prosperous new China built up and the Three People's Principles carried out to the full. Both sides especially welcomed President Chiang's proposals for "democratization of politics", "nationalization of the army", "equality and legality of all parties" as the only road to peaceful reconstruction.

From the above, one must conclude that the Kuomintang has been compelled at least to denounce in public its notorious policy of civil war, and to learn to talk in terms of peace, unity and democracy, any public discussions on which were till recently disliked and often forbidden by the Censors in Chungking.

It is a great relief to see that the Kuomintang Government under Chiang Kai-shek has begun to realise that democratization of politics and legal status for political parties, as well as nationalisation of the army, are indispensable to the peaceful reconstruction of the nation. This clearly indicates a victory for the democratic forces in China.

The certainty that a strong democratic tendency will dominate post-war Chinese politics has even forced the Kuomintang to alter its way of thinking, though of course, judging by its attitude towards various problems arising from the Unity Talks, one still cannot but reserve one's opinion as to whether the Kuomintang really has the sincerity to see the writing on the wall.

II. POLITICAL DEMOCRACY: It was unanimously agreed that the period of Political Tutelage must end with all possible speed, and a constitutional Government must be set up. As a necessary first step the National Government will convene a Political Consultative Council, in which representatives of all parties

and also respected non-party citizens will be invited to discuss national affairs and such questions as the convening of the National Congress and a programme for the peaceful reconstruction of the nation. The strength, organization, and function of the Council is now under discussion among the parties concerned. Both sides are agreed that as soon as the discussions are concluded, the Political Consultative Council will be summoned without delay.

The Political Consultative Council will be a kind of an All-Party Conference, the convening of which the Chinese Communist Party and other democratic forces, including the Democratic League, have been demanding since late last year. They have always regarded such a conference as the starting point of a final settlement of China's unhappy internal problems.

While the official statement reports that the strength, personnel and function of the proposed Council are still under discussion, there are indications that it will be held during the first weeks of November and that it will probably be composed of 36 members representing in equal number the Kuomintang, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Democratic League; the rest of the members are to be chosen from among reputed people acceptable to all three parties. In this fair and well balanced Council, the democratic elements will without doubt have the upper hand even though, as reports suggest, it will be presided over by Generalissimo Chiang.

The Kuomintang was not in a position to refuse such a Council, but it did not by any means feel happy about it. So, the question over the voting procedure has already been raised by the Kuomintang which does not want to bind itself to any decisions that may be reached under the influence of democrats. Hints have been thrown out that the Council will not vote at all, and that whenever a decision is made, it will be by a compromise agreeable to all.

The position of the Council also needs clarification. The Kuomintang Government intends to limit it to an advisory body, while the Democratic League in its National Assembly recently held in Chungking, clearly stated that it would not be satisfied if the Council was to remain under

a Government dominated by one of its participants, the Kuomintang, and if the decisions made by the Council were not to be regarded as final.

III. THE NATIONAL CONGRESS: On the question of the National Congress, the Chinese Communist Party made the following three proposals: a) re-election of the National Congress representatives, b) postponement of its convention, c) revision of its organisation, of its electoral system and of the May 5th (1935) Draft Constitution. The Government expressed the view that the National Congress representatives already elected should be retained, though their numbers could be increased within a reasonable extent. The May 5th Draft Constitution had already been examined and discussed in all quarters, and ideas for its revision put forward. The two parties were therefore unable to reach an agreement. But the Chinese Communist Party was unwilling to let disagreement on this issue disrupt general unity. Both the parties, however, agreed to refer this matter to the Political Consultative Council.

The convening of the National Congress is the most urgent and delicate issue among the political disputes that cause great uneasiness to every Chinese patriot. As the Congress is expected to be empowered to make China's first constitution (the lack of one during the 20 years of Kuomintang dictatorship, by the way, sounds more than ridiculous), it has been generally welcomed by the democrats in principle, who look upon it as the first and the most important step towards democracy. In fact, the success or failure of the National Congress will be the success or failure of the cause of democracy in China.

It might appear rather puzzling—perhaps the Kuomintang Government is intentionally trying to make it appear so—that when the Kuomintang has at last changed its heart, and decided to wind up its so-called "political tutelage", and is showing itself more than anxious to go ahead with the long-awaited democratisation by insisting on convening the National Congress for a constitution by November this year—the Chinese Communists and other democrats should oppose it. This, however, is not a

"Chinese puzzle", but a straight political issue, which no observer of Chinese affairs should overlook.

The National Congress, should it be convened as at present planned by the Kuomintang, would be an exclusively Kuomintang show and the constitution framed by it a Kuomintang cooked one. A draft constitution was in fact prepared by the Kuomintang authorities 10 years ago, and is only waiting before final adoption to be read three times before a battery of party yesmen.

The character of the National Congress as it stands at present can be easily judged from the nature of its composition. According to the Organic Law of the National Congress out of the total number of some 1,200 delegates, 460 are to be members of the Kuomintang Central Committee, which only recently extended its membership from 360 to 460 specially for this purpose. The rest of the delegates were elected in 1935 during the most rigorous period of Kuomintang dictatorship and civil war.

The Communist Party, the Democratic League and other democratic elements have persistently been demanding a re-election, on the plea that not only were the old delegates elected in an undemocratic way, and therefore did not represent the people, but that even the legality of the 1935 elections was disputable. One fails to see why the people should not be granted another chance to reconsider their representation, after so many years of suffering and turmoil. It is indeed a pity that despite unanimous opposition the Kuomintang should still adhere to such a foolish stand which, as a spokesman of the Democratic League shrewdly observed, is nothing but a 'joke'.

The Kuomintang did suggest, however, that they were prepared to turn all members of the People's Political Council (about 250) wholesale into members of the National Congress. May be this is the so-called "reasonable increase" the Kuomintang promised to allow. But the fact is that all P.P.C. members are appointed by the Kuomintang Government and therefore are predominantly Party men. Isn't this fact alone enough to give the game away?

IV. FREEDOM OF THE PEOPLE: On the question of the freedom of the people it was unanimously

agreed that the Government must ensure that the people enjoy those freedoms normally enjoyed by the people of all democratic countries, namely freedom of person, belief, speech, press, assembly and organisation. Present day laws must be abolished or revised in accordance with this principle.

V. LEGALITY OF POLITICAL PARTIES: The Chinese Communist Party proposed that the Government recognise the equal and legal status of the Kuomintang, the Communist Party and all other political parties. The Government declared that equality of all parties before the law was natural for a constitutional Government, and could be recognised immediately.

It is really heartening news that the Kuomintang Government, after some 20 years of rule over the people, is at last beginning to listen to the advice of its political opponents, and to understand the necessity of guaranteeing fundamental human rights and freedoms.

VI. SECRET POLITICAL POLICE: There was general agreement on the subject of secret political police. Both parties declared that the Government must strictly forbid the use of the power of arrest, trial and punishment by organs other than the legal police force.

Coming events alone can tell whether the Kuomintang was serious when it consented to the abolition of the secret police, but it at least serves to justify the accusations frequently made by Chinese democrats as well as foreign visitors about the semi-fascist nature of the Kuomintang regime, which had not only denied the very existence of the secret police system, but at times even boasted of its democratic nature !

VII. RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS: On the question of the release of political prisoners the Chinese Communist Party proposed that all political prisoners with the exception of traitors be immediately released by the Government. The Government declared that it was already preparing to do so of its own accord, and the Chinese Communist Party could present a list of political prisoners who should be released.

rather stubborn, but a further study of the question shows that their stand is just and reasonable. The Communists' offer for the reduction of their regular army from about 50 divisions (nearly one million men) to 24 or even 20 divisions or only two-fifths their present strength, is a concession indeed, especially if it is viewed in the light of Chinese history in which for decades military might has been political right. Similarly, the Communists' intention to withdraw troops from their bases in South China to the North points to the sincerity of their desire for peaceful reconstruction.

Nor must we forget the other side of the picture. While the principle of nationalising the army is acceptable to both parties, reduction and demobilisation should not be restricted to the Communist-led army alone. The National Army numbering some three million men is Kuomintang-owned through and through. It is these troops under Chiang that ought to be nationalised first. Naturally this question did not arise at the discussions as all the Government representatives without exception are Kuomintang officials. But who, after all, would want to hand over their arms under such conditions? For remember, the Kuomintang would still be fully armed while the Communists' army would be greatly reduced. Is it not possible that the Chinese Communists may have learnt the lessons of Greece?

X. LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN LIBERATED AREAS : Concerning the above, the Chinese Communist Party proposed that the Government should recognise the legal status of all classes of popularly elected local governments in the Liberated Areas. The Government, however, was of the opinion that the words 'Liberated Areas' could no longer be applicable after the Japanese surrender, and that the whole country should be put under one unified authority.

a) To begin with, the Chinese Communist Party accordingly proposed that provincial boundaries and administrative boundaries within the province should be readjusted according to the situation prevailing in the eighteen Liberated Areas, which are spread over the whole of China, and that all popularly elected

Government officials functioning there, should be retained and reappointed by the Central Government. The Government, however, considered the proposed readjustment of provincial boundaries to be too great a change, and was of the opinion that it could be done only through a comprehensive plan. The matter could not be decided within a short time. Meanwhile, it was pointed out by the Government representatives that in accordance with what President Chiang had told Mr. Mao, the Government would consider appointments recommended by the Chinese Communist Party after unified military orders and political authority were being observed throughout the country. Those who had been engaged in war and administrative work in the Liberated Areas would be given consideration for local employment by the Government on their past records, without any party prejudice.

b) At this stage the Chinese Communist Party submitted the second plan, which was composed of the following items:

(i) The Central Government should appoint persons recommended by the Chinese Communist Party as members of the Provincial Governments including the Chairman (Governor) in the following provinces : Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region, Jehol, Chahar, Hupeh, Shantung and Shansi.

(ii) Three members including the Vice-Chairman (Vice-Governor) should be recommended and appointed by the Central Government in the Provincial Governments of Suiyuan, Honan, Kiangsu, Anhwei, Hupeh and Kwangtung provinces.

(iii) The Vice-Mayors of the cities of Peiping, Tientsin, Tsingtao and Shanghai should be recommended by the Chinese Communist Party.

(iv) The Chinese Communist Party should be allowed to recommend persons to participate in the administration to be installed in the North Eastern Provinces (Manchuria).

After several discussions the Chinese Communist Party moderated its demands to the appointment of Chairman and members of its provincial administration for the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region, Jehol,

Chahar, Shantung and Hupeh; to the appointment of Vice-Chairman and members of Provincial Governments for Shansi and Suiyuan; and the appointment of Vice-Mayors for the three special Municipalities of Peiping, Tientsin and Tsingtao. On these proposals, the Central Government declared that the Chinese Communist Party might recommend to the Central Government the names of their comrades who were capable and who had made contribution to the war effort, for consideration for the appointments. But it would be contrary to the principle of unified order and authority if the Chinese Communist Party were allowed to recommend Governors and Vice-Governors in certain provinces.

c) Yet a third plan was proposed in place of the foregoing one. The Governments in all the Liberated Areas should be re-elected by the people. The Chinese Communist Party would welcome members of other parties to return to their home districts to take part in the elections. When more than one-half of the villages in one district had had popular elections, the district would start holding its elections and when more than one-half of the districts in a province had carried out their popular elections, there would be provincial elections. All village, district and provincial administration thus elected should be recognised by the Government.

In respect of plan (c) the Government declared that it was still contrary to the principle of unification of authority and though it would consider this procedure in electing district administrations, the popular elections for the provincial administrations must await the promulgation of Constitutional Government, and the readjustment of the status of Provincial Government. At present, the Government pointed out, all Provincial Governments would have to be appointed by the Central Government in order to restore the **status quo**.

d) Then came the fourth plan put forward by the Chinese Communist Party. It proposed that the position in the Liberated Areas should remain unchanged pending the enforcement of a constitution. Certain temporary measures should be carried out, to guarantee

the restoration of law and order. Meanwhile the Chinese Communist Party suggested the reference of the matter to the Political Consultative Council.

The Government considered that unification of political authority must come first, and was of the opinion that to delay the solution of this problem would hamper peaceful reconstruction. It expressed its willingness to continue negotiations for a concrete plan, to which the Chinese Communist Party also agreed.

The bargaining attitude of the Kuomintang Government towards this question has made progressive opinion uneasy. As we are aware from the reports of foreign correspondents visiting Communist ruled China, the Chinese Communist Party has achieved really great things in the provinces and districts for which they asked Governorships. There they have defeated the Japanese in battle, introduced their "New Democratic" system and through it set up stable and efficient administration. Peasant life in these areas has been improved to an extent undreamt of in the Kuomintang areas. It is only natural that they should want to be allowed to resume their administration under a general political agreement. At least—we should say—it is much more natural than the reinstallation of Kuomintang bureaucrats years after their desertion of their native towns and villages. The plan (c) would appear to be a better solution, involving direct judgement by the people. It is clear that the Kuomintang prefers bureaucracy to democracy.

The Democratic League of China is of the opinion that the Communists should be allowed temporarily to retain their control over both army and local administration in the Liberated Areas, just as the Kuomintang does in the other parts. The coming Political Consultative Council will probably produce wiser and more long-term decisions on this problem.

XI. TREATMENT OF TRAITORS AND PUPPETS :

Concerning the treatment of Chinese traitors and puppets, the Chinese Communist Party proposed that traitors should be heavily punished, and that the Puppet Army should be disbanded.

The Government raised no objection to this issue

on principle, but pointed out that the traitors should be dealt with according to the law, and that disbandment of the Puppet Army should be carried out in such a way as not to jeopardize local order and security.

Recent events have thrown some light upon a complicated and rather dangerous situation. Giving themselves up after the Japanese surrender, two of the leading Chinese traitors, Chow Fu-hai (second only to the Puppet President, Chen Kung-po) and Tin Mo-chun (Secret Police Chief of Nanking Government) were treated leniently by the Chungking authorities, and are no longer mentioned by them as traitors. It is rumoured that their experiences of anti-Communism may be sought, and made use of. Such is also the case of the treatment of Japanese and Puppet troops. The Japanese and the Puppets, it is reported, were allowed by the Chinese High Command to 'borrow' and keep ten rifles in each battalion, in order "to maintain order and security." It is this ominous attitude that has been encouraging and leading the Japanese and puppet troops to wage counter-offensives against the Communist forces in North China. In some cases, the Japanese and the Puppets even went so far as to claim that they had been incorporated into the Chinese National Army under the Kuomintang. The use of enemy forces to suppress the democratic movement in China, in the same manner as is being done in a number of colonies in the Far East should be received with grave concern by every true friend of the Chinese people.

XII. COMMUNISTS' PARTICIPATION IN ACCEPTING SURRENDER

Concerning the surrender of the Japanese troops in China, the Chinese Communist Party requested that they be allowed to participate in accepting surrender. The Government, however, declared that it would consider the request when the Chinese Communist Party began to recognise the authority of the Central Government.

It seems that the Kuomintang Government will not even consider the question of the Communists' participation

in accepting Japanese surrender. Their motives are obviously not honest since on the one hand they are carrying on negotiations, and on the other trying to go on with their own plan—with, of course, the American acting as spearheads.

But it is playing with fire. It is not difficult to guess what would be the feeling of the common people towards a Government that intends to force internal issues by the use of a foreign army, and what their reaction would be on witnessing the setting in of an order that looks to them much more like occupation than liberation! Already there have been reports indicating the danger of clashes between the U.S.-Kuomintang team and the Communist-led people's forces in North China. This is a very serious situation. We sincerely hope that the Kuomintang Government, as well as its foreign supporters, will think it over seriously before taking action. Civil War in China would inevitably develop into a first class international problem and we can't see how anyone would profit by it, in the long run.

{The above-quoted text of the communique was signed on October 10, 1945 in Chungking, by Wang Shih-chieh (absent), Chang Chih-chung and Shao Li-tze representing the Government, and Chou En-lai and Wang Jo-fei representing the Chinese Communist Party respectively.]

America And The Industrialisation Of China

By Yu Muai

[This article written last June for the Chungking daily of the Chinese Communist Party, **New China Daily News**, is of great value in our understanding of the way forward to the industrialisation of India.—Editor.]

CHINA cannot occupy the position of a weak nation or "poor relation" in the ranks of the Great Powers. In order to have the proper strength, China must industrialise—those who understand this principle are growing in number every day.

In the past, the advanced capitalist nations were afraid, for the most part, of the industrialisation of the backward nations, because they thought that at the first dawn of industrialisation of the backward countries these countries would snatch the limited world market away from the advanced nations. Therefore the capitalist nations more or less uniformly adopted a policy of imperialist obstruction of the industrialisation of the backward nations.

After the experience of this war, however, the people have already begun to understand this imperialist policy of obstruction. The result of this policy only causes the world market to shrink, increasingly and proportionately. On the other hand, the policy of promoting or aiding the industrialisation of backward countries not only cannot injure the existing markets of the advanced countries, but, on the other hand, industrialisation of the backward countries is the only means by which they can become really good markets for the advanced countries. It would thus not only solve the problems of the backward countries themselves, but would incidentally solve the market problems of the advanced countries also.

Using this basic point of departure, Mr. Donald Nelson's* opinion is worthy of praise. The example of Canada, which he gave, indicates the essence of this question as clear as

*Roosevelt's emissary to clean up war production in China.—Ed.

crystal. At the same time, it is precisely on this basic point, viz., industrialisation of China and our relations with our ally America—that there are profound and critical questions involved. Since the end of the European phase of the war, and with the imminent decisive battles against Japan, it is entirely natural that influential men among our Allies—and especially America—should take a deep interest in plans for the post-war industrialisation of our country. The foremost question is, what type of a plan of industrialisation China should have? Or, in other words, on what basis should the foundations for the industrialisation of China be laid?

There are a great many of these plans. It is not our intention to discuss or study each one of them. We shall discuss here the one among these plans and opinions most worthy of attention—that of Mr. Nelson. This is not only because Mr. Nelson is now the head of China's Office of War Production and because he understands the situation with regard to China's war-time industrialisation with exceptional clarity, and, what is more, his opinion actually summates every aspect of American opinion, and in a certain sense is official—it is rather because the essential points he raises appear to be strikingly practicable. We feel, therefore, that it is necessary to raise them for discussion from the standpoint of the Chinese people.

Unlike some other, fantastic schemes, Mr. Nelson's plan raises the question of the market at the very outset. In one sense, this is because for many years plans in which people fancifully discussed production without regard for the market totally failed. Perhaps it is this that leads Mr. Nelson to take the market as his starting point.

What type of market? Foreign market—concretely, the market that will be handed down by the Japanese after their defeat. Again, concretely, especially the market for the products of light industry and particularly of the textile industry. Mr. Nelson fully believes that China can produce textiles at very reasonable prices to replace Japan in the trade," and that beyond this Japanese market is the need for supplying a population of 1,200,000,000. This is a figure that will excite people's curiosity, that will draw the people's attention. For the present, we shall not discuss the post-war management of Japan—especially the question of her

light industry ; whether—if Japan is allowed to retain only just enough of her light industry to supply the vital needs of the Japanese people, and if export of her textile products is completely prohibited—her market of former days will become a complete vacuum—whether if all this occurs, China will thereby be able to replace Japan.

Mr. Nelson said, "In the past, America had neither the opportunity nor the intention of competing with Japan," suggesting thereby that in the future also America has no intention of monopolising this market. "Therefore, there is only China to fill in this vacuum." Whether or not the American textile industry really has any intention of snatching away this market in the future, we do not know. However, we know that England can certainly not follow this path. The market left by Japan, excluding China, will be in regions four-fifths of which are directly under British political control or influence. That is to say, if China wants to take the place of Japan in this market, China will inherit the persistent and keen competition between Japan and England, and this, even regarded from the perspective of post-war political unity and economic co-operation, is a question that should be considered more deeply and in greater detail. This is one aspect of the matter at hand.

Another aspect is that it is not only a question of need, but also a matter of capacity. The ability of the Japanese in the past to retain their position on the world market was based, as everyone knows, on two main supports : (i) the policy of large-scale dumping on the outside world, (ii) the domestic policy of colonial wages, kept down to a bare minimum. Suppose China wished to take the former place of Japan on the world market. According to the experience of competition in the past, this would necessitate inheriting the Japanese external policy of dumping and the internal, domestic, policy of colonial wages kept down at a bare minimum. These policies would be extremely unprofitable for the Chinese people. This is a question which needs no further consideration ; such a viewpoint we must reject. The Chinese people reject this sort of road to industrialisation. And, in reality, such a road cannot lead to the industrialisation of China.

Mr. Nelson's plan is like the construction of a belt

One buckle is Japan's former textile market, another is the plan for developing the Yangtze river hydro-electric power projects. One aspect is industrial products for the export market, and the other is the industrial power that industrialisation relies on. Between these two is the establishment of communications in the interior of China. Dr. Sa Fan-chi's Yangtze Hydro-electric Plan, viewed purely from the artistic standpoint, is an enormous project. It will perhaps have tremendous influence on the future of industrialisation in China.

However, we know that the power industry is not designed for its own sake, but that its existence and development require the modernisation of agriculture and the development of light and heavy industries. If our agriculture cannot be modernised, and our light and heavy industries develop on a large scale, then even though the cost of electric power from the Yangtze river power plants might be many times cheaper than in America, yet only a few people could afford to and would use it. If our agriculture does not undergo a fundamental transformation, then no matter how cheap the price of the artificial fertiliser produced as an auxiliary to the production of the power plants be, there would be few people to use it. The reason is that for the vast majority of Chinese tenants and small peasants, oppressed by rents, taxes, and usury, the cost-free human night soil is much cheaper than the artificial fertiliser.

The Yangtze river hydro-electric project is an immense plan. It has an important place in the complete plan for the real future industrialisation of China. But there are a few prerequisites that must be fulfilled before it can be put into operation. If these are not fulfilled, or not energetically brought into being, then instead of being the key to the industrialisation of China the plan would have the opposite result.

In Chiang-Che, a small county seat, such a situation exists. Power machinery has already been installed. Moreover, calculating the market for electric light for every family in the town, the cost of electric light is less than the cost of burning oil lamps. But in many cases the power machinery purchased many years ago is not in action and is getting rusty. Is this not contradictory? No. It is not

contradictory. The price of electric power is indeed cheap, but for the majority of the people in that town, having no light at all is even cheaper. This is one aspect of the question.

Another aspect is that there is only a small number of families in the town who light lamps at night, and if we calculate the price according to those who could possibly use electricity, the price of electric lights would be far greater than that of oil lamps! Since among the common people, the purchasing power is too low for the amount of established machinery, the machinery intended to give out brilliant light can only lie helplessly in the dark and silently rust away.

The Yangtze Hydro-electric Power Plan is an immense plan. It can illuminate all China. But present-day China is like a huge, backward town. In order to enable every family in this unlighted town to use electricity, to have light, we must first give each family resident in the town the capacity to buy lights.

Now about the question of capital accumulation. Mr. Nelson thinks that when the establishment of the textile industry is begun in China, China and America would jointly manage it. America would provide from 60 to 70 per cent of the capital, China would provide 30 to 40 per cent. Afterwards, year by year, China would purchase the American shares of stock until the Chinese controlled all the property. The establishment of industry in post-war China requires a large amount of foreign capital from the U.S. government and private sources, in the form of loans. Everyone recognizes the need for this, and everyone welcomes it. But the question is not one of welcoming foreign capital, but of how this foreign capital is applied. We must on this basis draw up and execute a policy that will guarantee the scale and rapidity of the Chinese people's accumulation of capital; our plan should be concerned with this rather than the investment policy, economic policy, financial policy—monetary and commercial, and customs policy of the foreign capital interests involved.

Otherwise, frankly speaking, we cannot make out, on the basis of this 7 to 3 inequality, what guarantee China has that in the future she will be able gradually to recover this 70% from foreign capital. Needless to say, this is not

only a question of policy but even more vitally a question of political power. Everyone knows that in the process of industrialisation the backward countries have utilised foreign capital on a large scale. Post-Civil War America did it, and Meiji Japan also did it. But whether it was America or Japan, their use of foreign capital was based on one principle : that was, that regardless of the method, one way or another the guiding position in the entire process of industrialisation must be the guaranteeing the scale and rapidity of the nation's (people's) accumulation of capital. Otherwise, there is only the prospect of the country's being reduced to a colonial status. This does not mean a negative restriction of foreign capital, but rather, helping the nation's (people's) capital to grow larger with greater speed.

Many people have studied the reasons for the success of Japan's Meiji Restoration (industrialisation), and the failure of the Manchu "New Policy," but few people have brought out the aspect of being anti-foreign, or of fawning on foreign interests. The political power of the Manchus, representing the feudal land-owning interests, could not possibly guarantee the development of the national (people's) capital. That is to say, if we cannot get on our own feet, as American Secretary of Commerce Wallace hopes for us, we will not only be unable to get back the shares of foreign capital, but, what is more, true industrialisation will be absolutely impossible for China.

What is the crux of the question ? Mr. Nelson avoided the question of the dependable and limitless Chinese domestic market ; he shunned it for the unreliable and limited foreign market. He avoided the political question of the complete reform of China's agrarian system as the necessary foundation for the industrialisation of China ; he shunned it for Sa Fan-chi's plan with its artistic "devil's web." He avoided the question of the minimum level of industrialisation in China, necessitating the treatment of light and heavy industry as equally important—for only thus could Chinese industry be independent ; he shunned this for the development of light industry and amusement industries alone—industries of secondary need. He avoided the question of the thorough-going industrialisation of China as the foundation of long-run profit for America ;

he shunned it for a whole-hearted hope that China would develop the products of the former textile industry (lost after Japan's defeat), planning for China to complete the circle in the American programme of buying raw-materials—the three-cornered trade policy.

From the Chinese viewpoint, this is not a real industrialisation plan. From the American viewpoint also this is not a real plan for large-scale expansion of the market. It cannot solve any aspect of Chinese-American problems. Its ultimate aim is: to be partly carried out, but it will present a China in reality as poor and weak as before, but disguised in the garb of a Great Power, and involved in the whirlpools of the struggle for the seizure of post-war world markets.

For A Free And Prosperous Punjab Villages

BY RAMESH CHANDRA & PREM SAGAR

THE British and those who work for them point proudly at the Punjab and say : "This province has become rich under our rule, fat with the golden grain." The Punjab has been painted by imperialist propaganda as full of rich, milk-drinking and *ghee*-eating peasants, growing ever richer under the benign British *Sarkar*.

But the British *Sarkar* did not come and create any paradise in India. And the Punjab was not the British pet child by any means. And so, as in the rest of the country, the White conquerors came and planted on the backs of the peasantry, new exploiters :

Out of the traitors who helped them to enslave our people, the conquerors created the PETTY PRINCES, the *JAGIRDARS* and *LANDLORDS*.

By introducing money economy and dumping on us their manufactured goods, thus ending for all time the self-sufficient village community, the British created the *BANIA* (the money-lender and the trader).

And on top of all, the foreign invaders sat themselves —preventing the industrialisation of the country, in order to keep their monopoly over the market intact.

What have these exploiters done between them to the Punjab ? Let us examine the facts in detail.

The British boast of the new irrigation schemes they have introduced in the Punjab in the last hundred years. They boast of the new land brought under cultivation, of new agrarian measures, of improvements through the Agricultural Department, through co-operatives. What did all these much-advertised "achievements" amount to ? Did they stop the steady deterio-

ration of agricultural and peasant life? Or did the deterioration continue, despite the crores of rupees spent on the Government's great "projects", "plans" and "measures"?

WILL THE PUNJAB REMAIN A SURPLUS PROVINCE?

Let us compare the growth of population through the years with the growth of agriculture—of the area under cultivation and the area under major food-grains:

YEAR	POPULATION	TOTAL SOWN AREA	AREA UNDER MAJOR FOOD-GRAINS
	(in millions)	(in million acres)	(in million acres)
1891-1892	18.6	23.1	—
1911-1912	19.6	—	18.3
1921-1922	20.7	28.8	21.5
1931-1932	23.6	—	21.3
1941-1942	28.4	31.0	20.8

This table shows clearly that whereas during the last fifty years, the population of the province has increased from 18.6 millions in 1891 to 28.4 millions in 1941—that is by *fifty-two per cent*—the total sown area of the province increased by only *thirty-four per cent* (from 23.1 million acres to 31 million acres). During the last two decades the population has increased by 37 per cent (from 20.7 millions in 1921 to 28.4 millions in 1941), while the total sown area increased by only 8 per cent (from 28.8 to 31 million acres). During the same period the area under food-grains actually registered a *fall* (from 21.5 to 20.8 million acres).

What is apparent is that the growth in agriculture in the Punjab under the British Raj is lagging far behind the growth in population. This must hold out dangerous prospects for the future. The striking fact of the actual *fall* in the area under food-grains in the last twenty years points sharply towards a future when the "surplus Punjab" may well become deficit, if it is allowed to continue as at present.

The steadily deteriorating food position in the "surplus"

Punjab is highlighted by the recent recurring famines and scarcity spells in the deficit districts both of the east (such as Hisar) and the west (such as Rawalpindi). The hoarders of the Punjab have found in these districts their black havens in the last three years of food crisis. Here control rates have been exceeded with impunity and conditions bordering on famine have been prevalent for short periods in certain areas.

UNTILLED LAND AND STARVING, WORKLESS TILLERS

While the apologists of the British are never tired of telling their audience of the fallow land brought under the plough because of their "wonderful" new schemes, they keep silent about the vast undeveloped fertile regions, which remain uncultivated, while millions of landless labourers and their families live on the brink of starvation. The cultivable waste in the Punjab has not decreased appreciably with the years :

QUINQUENNIAL UNDER FORESTS CULTURABLE WASTE CULTIVATED

AVERAGE ENDING WITH YEAR	(i n s q u a r e m i l e s)			AREA
	i n	s q u a r e	m i l e s)	
1910-11	5,600		27,800	46,400
1920-21	3,700		26,600	48,900
1930-31	3,400		25,200	50,400
1935-36	3,300		23,900	51,600

In the 25 years between 1910-11 and 1935-36, the culturable waste has been reduced by only 14 per cent (from 27,800 to 23,900 square miles), and the cultivated area increased by only 10 per cent (from 46,400 to 51,600 square miles). A vast area (23,900 square miles or about 149 lakh acres) equal to 46 per cent of the total cultivated area was still lying fallow in 1935-36.

Lakhs of landless labourers and cultivator-owners of uneconomic holdings live in dire poverty, while the life-giving land remains untilled. Such is the crazy but logical result of the parasitic landlordism and the enslaving imperialist rule which have the Punjab in their grip.

IRRIGATION CRISIS

The canals of the Punjab are one of the biggest boasts of the British. And it is true that they are a boon to the province. But canal irrigation has not been appreciably extended during the last twenty-five years :

YEAR	ACREAGE UNDER CANAL IRRIGATION	TOTAL AREA SOWN
	(in million acres)	(in million acres)
1921-22	11.2	28.8
1931-32	12.3	—
1943-44	13.3	33.0

Thus, whereas in 1921-22, 38.8 per cent of the area under cultivation was irrigated by the canals, in 1943-44 the percentage had gone up only to 40.6 per cent, that is by 1.8 per cent only.

And today when the whole of the *Doaba* (the land between the two rivers of Beas and Sutlej—the districts of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur) is threatened with the prospect of going dry as the water-level in its wells sinks rapidly lower—the Punjab Government refuses to build a canal for the *Doaba* despite the persistent demands of the kisans of the area. A concrete scheme for such a canal together with the offer of labour has been made by the Provincial Kisan Sabha on behalf of the *Doaba* kisans, but there has been no response from the Unionist Government.

The poor peasant pays heavily for irrigation, but in return receives nothing but oppression from the Canals Department. Bribery and corruption are prevalent on a very wide scale. The remodelling of canal outlets is done in such a way as to please the favoured rich peasants and landlords, and often results in conflicts of the most violent type between those who gain and those who lose by the remodelling. The cleaning of silt in the canals is seldom undertaken without the payment of heavy bribes. Soil erosion and damage caused by the failure of the Department to line the canal banks is never compensated.

No popular committees to supervise the canals and their use are recognised by the Government. And where through Kisan Sabha initiative, floods and erosion have been prevented by

the collective, voluntary and free labour of the local peasants, the Canals Department has actually sued them for "interfering" with its property ! Such is the dog-in-the-manger policy of the Irrigation bureaucrats under imperialist rule.

If this has been the fate of agriculture under the British Sarkar, how has the agriculturist fared ? What is the truth about the proverbial *ghee-eating* and milk-swilling Punjabi ?

THIRTY-SEVEN LAKH FAMILIES ON BRINK OF STARVATION

The 1931 *Census Report* showed that of those who own or work on the land in the Punjab 8 per cent are rent-receivers, 56 per cent are cultivating owners and 36 per cent are tenants. Just before the outbreak of the war (what may be termed "normal" times) according to the Punjab Land Revenue Committee, there were 23½ lakh cultivating owners. On the basis of the ratio established in 1931, we can take it that the number of tenants was nearly 16 lakhs.

Of the 23½ lakh cultivating owners, 63.7 per cent or nearly *fifteen lakhs* are owners holding less than 5 acres each—that is, living in conditions which must mean of necessity rack-renting debt and poverty.

Of the 16 lakh tenants, less than one-seventh have occupancy rights. The rest—nearly *fourteen lakhs*—are tenants-at-will, living under political serfdom and starvation.

In 1931, the number of landless labourers was 7.4 lakhs ; in the previous decade the number had been rising at the rate of nearly six per cent per annum. We can take it that the number of landless labourers increased rapidly even after 1931. But in any case, even the most moderate estimate should place the number at a minimum of *eight lakhs* before the war broke out in 1939.

Thus we have **FIFTEEN LAKH** debt-ridden small peasant-owners, **FOURTEEN LAKH** serf-tenants and **EIGHT LAKH** slave labourers—a total of **THIRTY-SEVEN LAKH AGRICULTURAL WORKERS**, living with their families on the brink of starvation.

Let us examine the lives of each of these sections of the rural population in the "normal" years before the war.

DEBT-RIDDEN SMALL PEASANT

The small peasant lived in constant danger of starvation. His land ~~was~~ in many cases mortgaged ; he was nearly always in debt; his farm scarcely ever produced enough for him to eat and he was forced to purchase a large proportion of his food. His steady impoverishment is strikingly revealed in the increased proportion of the poorest classes of landowners and the increased share in the land of the rich :

OWNERS HOLDING PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NO. OF OWNERS	PER CENT OF TOTAL				
	1924	1939	ACREAGE OF LAND	1924	1939
Below 1 acre	17.9	20.2	1.0	0.8	
1 to less than 5 acres	40.8	43.5	11.0	11.4	
5-10 acres	18.0	16.9	15.1	13.1	
10-15 "	8.2	7.3	11.5	9.1	
15-20 "	4.3	3.6	8.4	7.2	
20-25 "	2.7	2.2	6.8	5.6	
25-50 "	4.8	3.9	20.4	14.8	
Over 50 ..	3.3	2.4	25.8	38.0	

There has thus been a steady increase in the proportion of holders of uneconomic holdings. From 1924 to 1939, the total number of owners who held less than 5 acres each rose from 58.7 per cent to 63.7 per cent. The share of these owners despite their increase remained more or less constant, at a meagre 12 per cent of the total cultivated land.

At the other end, the share of the rich in the land jumped higher in the same period, while their numbers decreased. The percentage of owners holding more than 25 acres decreased from 8.1 to 6.3, while their share in the total land increased from 46.2 per cent to 54.8 per cent. The difference is even more marked if we take into consideration only the higher category of owners, those owning 50 acres and more. Here the percentage of owners

fell from 3.3 to 2.4, while their share in the land shot up from 25.8 per cent to 38 per cent.

What is apparent is that an expropriation of small land-owners is rapidly taking place. An investigation conducted by the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry revealed that in the years 1931-32, 1932-33, and 1933-34, in the districts of Jhang, Dera Ghazi Khan and Muzaffargarh, the average annual loss to small owners by sale to rich owners was 642 acres.

The rate of expropriation rose rapidly in the pre-war years. The number of transfers per annum rose at a quick pace :

QUINQUENNIAL AVERAGE ENDING WITH THE YEAR	NUMBER OF TRANSFERS			
1901	49,096
1911	43,430
1921	51,289
1931	64,649
1936	74,407
1941	100,415

The misery of the small peasant is strikingly shown also in the rise in the amount of land mortgaged with the years. In 1939-40 the area under mortgage had reached the figure of over *four million acres*, equal to 13.4 per cent of the total cultivated area :

YEAR	TOTAL CULTIVATED AREA UNDER MORTGAGES (acres)	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CULTIVATED AREA
1921-22	2,930,306	10.2
1931-32	3,632,189	11.9
1934-35	3,867,503	12.5
1939-40	4,122,149	13.4

And as for his burden of debt, the small peasant is ever becoming more bent than before under its load. The total debt in the Punjab was *one hundred and thirty-five crore rupees* in 1929. There is hardly any district where more than a third of the peasantry is free from debt, and in some cases the percentage of those

who are in debt is as high as *ninety per cent*. The total debt in the Punjab is $25\frac{1}{2}$ times the land revenue—a higher proportion than in other provinces (in Madras, debt is 19 times the land revenue, in the United Provinces 17 times, in Bengal 18, Bombay 15, Sind 16, the Central Provinces $12\frac{1}{2}$ and in Assam 21 times).

THE SERF-TENANT

The tenant, of course, is as a rule living under conditions of which people in other countries could never even dream. An ever-increasing army, the tenants are for the most part tenants-at-will, with no occupancy rights :

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CULTIVATED AREA WHICH IS WORKED BY

Year	Owners	All Tenants	Tenants At Will	Occupancy Tenants
1891-92	53.2	45.9	35.7	10.2
1901-02	45.9	53.0	42.7	10.3
1911-12	45.9	53.1	44.2	8.9
1921-22	44.5	54.3	45.9	8.4
1931-32	42.9	55.6	48.1	7.5
1936-37	41.6	56.8	48.8	8.0

In fact the increased area brought under cultivation through the years has not created more free peasant cultivators, but only more slaves for the landlords. For while the total cultivated area has increased by 34 per cent, the total cultivated by owners has gone up by only 5 per cent, while that cultivated by tenants has shot up by *sixty-six per cent*.

Of the tenants, the vast majority are tenants-at-will, who can be turned out by the landlord whenever he likes. They have no legal rights whatsoever. Of the land cultivated by these tenants-at-will, 76.1 per cent is let out by the landlord on *batai* terms (that is the tenant has to pay as rent, a fixed share of his produce which varies between one-third and two-fifths, but is usually one-half).

Cash rents are paid only on 15 per cent of the land worked by tenants-at-will, while rents "at revenue rates" are charged

only on 9 per cent. Landlords are more and more forcing their tenants to take out land on *batai* terms rather than on cash terms, and even before the war, this process had resulted in the proportion of land under *batai* increasing from 62.8 per cent in 1891-92 to 76.1 per cent in 1936-37.

Under the *batai* system the tenant is particularly hard hit. He has to bear more than three-quarters of the expenses of production, and yet the landlord takes his share from the gross produce. Even when the tenant makes a net profit, which is not the rule, the share of the landlord is on an average 75 per cent of the produce. In many cases the landlord's share has been known to reach the colossal proportion of 99 per cent.

It is also to be noted that the highest farm income under these conditions is Rs. 72 per year, for a family of 4 to 5 souls. It is out of the meagre portion left for him that the tenant is forced to live. Often he has to borrow in order to pay his share of the land revenue and to keep himself and his family alive.

The Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry made an investigation into the proportion of the net income which goes to the landlord and the tenant in various villages of the province. Here are the results :

VILLAGE	PERCENTAGE OF NET INCOME OF LANDLORD & TENANT							
	1929-30		1933-34		1939-40		1941-42	
	L.	T.	L.	T.	L.	T.	L.	T.
Badala	75	25	89	11	—	—	—	—
(Jullundur Dist.)								
Chak Danyal	—	—	91	9	99	1	67	33
(Jhelum Dist.)								
Chak 145|9L	68	32	64	36	73	27	64	36
(Montgomery Dist.)								
Chak 122 S.B.	98	2	80	20	—	—	—	—
(Shahpur Dist.)								
Chak 248 R. B.	79	21	93	7	58	42	80	20
(Lyallpur Dist.)								

Besides the *batai*, the tenant is forced to pay all sorts of illegal, but customary cesses—on marriages and births in the land.

lord's family—in fact on every possible excuse. Some of these cesses are outlined below :

Kharah Zemindara : One seer to five seers a maund often collected in the canal colonies and western and southwestern districts.

Jholi : The landlord, after the division of the produce, holds out his *jholi* (loose end of the shirt or *dhobi*) for the tenant to fill.

Dalla : A child's skirt full of grain, sometimes levied in addition to *Jholi*.

Tobra : Free feed of corn given by the tenant to the landlord's horse.

Kiraya : In some villages, *Kiraya* (fare) is taken on the ground that it is the duty of the tenant to carry the landlord's share of the produce to his place.

Munshiana : Contribution for the pay of the landlord's *mushshi* (clerk-accountant).

Muhassali Dumbiri : A payment for the landlord's agent and crop-watcher, which generally means one seer per maund.

Bhik : A levy ostensibly for charitable purposes.

Karda : In Kangra (only) on irrigated land, the owner gets a fraction (3/48) of the produce before division.

Malba : A fixed sum levied per well on the tenant by the landlord.

Thus oppressed and squeezed by the British-created landlords and princes and *jagirdars*, the tenants live in a daily fear of eviction and assault, their women themselves are subject by barbarous custom to the sweet will of the lord.

THE KAMMIN

The landless labourer—the *kammin*—is the slave of all. Forced into work at literally starvation wages, he is able to secure a steady income only during the sowing and harvesting seasons. Otherwise unemployed, he is always a victim of debt and hunger. With the failure to develop industry and the expropriation of the small peasants, the number of the landless labourers steadily swells :

YEAR	NO. OF LANDLESS LABOURERS	INDEX	INDEX OF POPULATION
1921	4,63,906	100	100
1931	7,36,028	158.7	114

Despised socially, often an untouchable, the *kammin* has no right in many districts even to own a house or a piece of land in the village. He lives on the mercy of the peasants and the landlords. Being at the bottom, it is he who suffers most the bullying of the village officials, the police and the rich peasants, it is he who is perpetually harnessed for forced labour by them.

This is the truth about the 'prosperous' peasant of the Punjab. Poverty, hunger, debt, unemployment—these are what the British and the exploiters they created gave to the Punjab, while they themselves wallowed in parasitical luxury, growing richer and richer, eating into the peasantry.

Not only do these landlords—the *jagirdars*—the progeny of the alien conquerors oppress the people, but they have destroyed the land itself. They prevent the improvement of agriculture and bring on the Punjab the threat of going deficit. The huge profits they receive—the *batai* and the illegal cesses—are used for the worst and most degenerate forms of luxuries, never for the improvement of their land, for wells or for better manure or better seed.

The tenant is usually too deep in debt and literally too hungry to be able to afford even the slightest improvement. If we remember that nearly 60 per cent of the total cultivated area (in 1936-37 it was 56.8 per cent) is tenant-cultivated, and that 6.3 per cent of the owners hold more than 52.8 per cent of the land in the Punjab—it is easy to see how a small handful of landlords are keeping more than half the cultivated land of the province bereft of all agricultural advancement, in backward, primitive conditions.

The Government of the Punjab, instead of abolishing landlordism (as in Bengal, where the Floud Commission has at least recommended the abolition of *Zemindari*), creates every year new landlords, not only indirectly by its helping the impoverishment of the poor peasantry, but also directly by conferring new

jagirs (grants of land) out of the Crown lands to its most favoured servants. In fact in the Punjab, the landlords are the traditional base of the toadies. From among them, the British choose their agents. Today's Unionist Party is the organised body of 'Government-grant' landlords and through it the imperialists keep the Punjab safe for reaction.

CASH FOR POLICE—NOT FOR AGRICULTURE

If the landlords do nothing at all to improve agricultural conditions, the Government itself spends only a nominal amount for seed and manure improvement or any other branch of agricultural development. If we examine the figures of the Punjab Budget for 1943-44, we find that a paltry sum of 5.9 million rupees has been spent on Agriculture, Co-operation and Veterinary Departments—a mere 3.5 per cent of the total expenditure and 6.1 per cent of the total income from land (which is 97.2 million rupees). Compare this with the 20½ million rupees expenditure in 1943-44 and the estimated 27.4 millions in 1945-46—for Police. Here are the proportions of the total expenditure in 1943-44 according to the final Budget estimates :

Agriculture, Co-operation, Veterinary	..	3.5 per cent
Education, Medical, Health	..	14.4 " "
Police	..	12.1 " "
Civil Administration	..	25.9 " "

In these figures lies the reason for the primitive agricultural methods, the vast area of culturable waste, the threatening collapse of agriculture due to water-logging and salt-effervescence, the lack of water in the Doaba, the havoc caused by leakages in the canals and nullahs.

POLICE RAJ

But in these figures also lies the reason for the misery of the Punjab village, continually under the lash of the police and the corrupt village officials.

Every patriotic and kisan movement in the rural areas has

been attacked by police repression. The vindictive Sarkar has imposed police posts in different villages in every political district. The centres of Kisan Sabha activity (such as the village of Chuhar Chak in Ferozepore) are especially singled out and police posts placed there.

Ostensibly meant to 'protect' the village from dacoits or to punish the village for harbouring dacoits—in reality, the police post does nothing but commit horrible atrocities on the people, drawing not merely a forced levy under official orders, but robbing the people of whatever they can, ruthlessly and by every manner of threat and duress. Every villager's labour is at the disposal of the police, every chicken, every buffalo can be harnessed for their needs.

In the landlord areas, the people are kept down with the aid of the landlord. Dare they raise their voice and out they go, after suffering nameless indignities and penalties at the hands of the landlord's agents.

The village officials—the *patwari*, the *lambardar*, the *zaildar*, the *tehsildar*—lord it over the villages exacting bribes shamelessly. Indeed it has become part of their routine, the accepted practice for them to be corrupt. Resistance to their exactions is met with the launching of false prosecutions, with public beatings and every possible harassment.

The *panchayats*—supposed to be organs of village self-government, of which the Government boasts—are a farce. Often elections are set aside by the district officials, if 'undesirable' elements are chosen. Normally the *panchayat* officer comes and nominates the local village officials and rich peasants to the *panchayat*, and there the matter ends. Seldom has a *panchayat* been able to act independently against the village officials without being suspended promptly.

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WAR PROSPERITY ?

But what about the war years? The picture so far painted is of the "normal" pre-war years. Claims are made that war and the high prices of food rid the Punjab's peasant of his debt and he became prosperous. It is said that the poor peasants and

the agricultural labourers were given jobs in the war services and thus they made big savings. And now post-war schemes are expected to bring the millennium. How far are these claims justified?

It is true that the high prices of wheat which prevailed after December 1941 did enable the *middle peasant* to wipe out his debt to a large extent. But how was this done? The debt and mortgages were liquidated by curtailing the standard of living, by buying less manufactured goods—cloth, sugar, iron implements, cement etc.—and also by actually *selling* bits of land at the prevalent high prices. In this way it is estimated that 28.4 per cent of the total mortgaged area was redeemed.

But the cost of curtailing the standard of living—even the diet—was heavy and undernourishment led last year, for instance, to epidemics such as cholera hitting the whole of the Punjab.

In any case it is apparent that the bulk of the agricultural population—the poor peasant, who instead of gaining by increased prices of food, loses, for he has to buy food for his own needs and has no surplus to sell; the tenant, who again has no surplus, but only a deficit and the agricultural labourer whose real wage fell with the rise in food—all suffered by the rise in prices.

For instance, the following table shows the rise in the daily wages of the labourers :

	PRE-WAR	1944		RISE PER CENT
	Rs. as. ps.	Rs. as. ps.		
Field labourer	0 6 0	1 12 0		366
<i>Karigar</i> (mason, carpenter, blacksmith)	0 13 0	2 8 0		200
Weaver (for 20 yards)	1 4 0	4 0 0		220

But the rise in food and other purchases was as follows :

<i>Wheat</i>	..	..	..	200 to 250 per cent.
<i>Gram</i>	..	..	..	200 to 250 ,
<i>Bullocks</i>	..	..	..	309 ,
<i>Buffalos</i>	..	..	..	408 ,
<i>Cows</i>	..	..	..	463 ,
<i>Camels</i>	..	..	..	319 ,
<i>Iron</i>	..	..	..	600 ,
<i>Cloth</i>	..	..	..	500 ,

These figures show how severely the agricultural labourer suffered during the war, despite the ostensible increase in his wage. The misery of the cultivator or tenant who had no surplus is also apparent.

From the shortage and famine of the necessities of life such as cloth, there is no doubt that the hardest hit were the poor peasants and *kammins* who had no extra clothes to tide them through the years of crisis, nor the extra money to buy in the black market. While the tragic scenes of Bengal were not witnessed in the Punjab, the depots saw heart-rending scrambles and fights, and there were instances reported in the press from almost every district, of burials being held up for lack of cloth to wrap the corpses, and also of suicides by women who could not get even a piece of cloth to cover themselves.

It is said that war services brought in a big extra income to the Punjab during the war years. But an investigation carried out in 1944 in 20 villages of the Ludhiana District shows that though 19 per cent of the male population between the ages of 18 and 25 years had been recruited to the army, the remittances to the villages averaged only about one rupee per month per head of the population. From reports from various districts, it is clear that remittances from soldiers were small for the most part, and in many cases nothing was received at all.

PROFITS FOR THE RICH

This can hardly be called war-prosperity ! Compare it with the gigantic profits of the big landlords and traders. Traders who bought wheat from the peasant at Rs. 6.8 and Rs. 7 a maund sold at Rs. 9 a maund and often more. Even a moderate dealer made a clear profit of a lakh of rupees at every harvest, a thing he could never even dream of in pre-war days when his average profit was hardly even more than two to four annas a maund.

Landlords who sold their wheat previously at Rs. 2.6 a maund now received as much as 9 rupees a maund. To the bigger landlords who need but a negligible fraction of their produce for their own use, the high prices were all war-profits. It has been calculated that of the normal 34 lakh tons of wheat produced in

the Punjab, some $6\frac{1}{2}$ lakh tons go straight as profit (*batai* share) to landlords. Calculating at a net war profit of Rs. 6-10 a maund (the difference between war and pre-war prices), we see that the total war profits of the handful of landlords were over *twelve crores* per annum. Add to this their share of other crops like cotton, where the rise in prices has been even greater and one should well reach a figure of about *forty crores* per annum.

For the landlords and traders, the war certainly meant prosperity, but for the poor peasant, the tenant and *kammin*, it meant increasing oppression and poverty.

The war brought other hardships for the peasants besides the economic. The police in alliance with the village officials and *jagirdars* became more and more powerful during the war, using the Defence of India Rules to crush the peasants more and more and exact extra illegal cesses and levies.

The forcible collection of War and Zemindara League Funds ground down the already starving rural population. Police *zoolum* increased on an unparalleled scale. Only recently in a village in Lahore District, the police actually burnt down a number of houses, after beating to within an inch of their lives almost all the villagers, because they refused to pay towards the War Funds. Stories of the atrocities committed on political workers arrested and locked up in police stations all over the province would shock the democratic world.

POST-WAR PROSPECTS

But if the war brought distress to the peasantry and lowered sharply the rural standard of living, the post-war period is going to bring a worse crisis on their heads.

Eight lakhs who have gone to the Army and to the Auxiliary labour services will be returning back to the land after demobilisation. They are mostly poor peasants' and agricultural labourers' sons. They will be unemployed—despite all the facade of labour exchanges. They will be an extra load on the already overpressed land. Add to them those who are every day being thrown out of the industries as the war factories close down. Already thousands of tailors from the parachute factories and thou-

sands from steel and allied industries have been sent back to eat off the villages, from where they came.

The fall in prices which will follow deflation and the stoppage of Government's war expenditure will first affect the sale price of the peasants' produce, while the prices of industrial goods will remain up. This will hit the poor peasant most.

Unemployment and the stream of the unemployed from the cities and the Army to the villages will depress the wages of agricultural labour, while the cost of living will not drop correspondingly. This will hit the *kammin*.

The landlords, seeing that the labour wage and the wheat price are dropping, will try to raise their rents and drive out the tenants-at-will and replace them either with new tenants or unemployed labourers who are willing to give a bigger rent. This will hit the *muzaras* (tenants).

Thus soon after the elections are over and when the issue of independence and popular government is on the agenda, the poor peasants, the *kammins* and the *muzaras*—that is the bulk of the Punjab's peasantry—will be faced with a new crisis, a situation of growing unemployment and starvation.

GOVERNMENT 'PLANS'

The post-war development plan of the Punjab Government for the next five years is a *paper plan*. It is a plan for spending 116 crores which are to come from the Government of India and by raising loans. It allots to the building of irrigation and hydro-electric power stations the lion's share of the expenditure—*forty per cent*. To agricultural development only 7 per cent is allotted and only 5 per cent to industries.

There is not a word about the abolition of landlordism in the plan—the essential *sine qua non* of any post-war plan meant to bring prosperity to the people and save them from catastrophe. The plan says nothing about giving land to the army of landless, about cancelling the vicious burden of debt, most of which has been repaid many times already. There is nothing to indicate that the Government intends making the load of taxation more

equitable, so that the poor are not over-taxed, while the rich landlords wallow in luxuries.

The truth is that it is a plan made by landlords and traders, the notorious hoarders of the Unionist Party, who are thinking in terms of making big money out of the dividends on irrigation and power stations, who want to come to terms with foreign capital to share the profits of trade and modern industrial development, and at the same time retain landlordism.

The Unionist 'plan' is a part of the imperialists' plan to keep India a subject Dominion. In tune with imperialist aims, the Punjab post-war plan aims at striking a deal between the British and Indian capitalists and the Indian princes and landlords to share power and profit, and thus keep on the present system of imperialist monopoly and landlordism and princely autocracy, which has reduced India to slavery and poverty.

It is a bogus plan which will never come into operation. But if its authors, the imperialist toadies Khizar Hyat and Co. of the landlord Unionist Party, are allowed to come back to power in the coming elections, they will bring on the head of the Punjab and India another post-war crisis as at the end of the last war, and with it another round of devastating famine.

The serfdom, poverty and oppression of the village in the Punjab can never be abolished unless *jagirdari* goes, unless the imperialist monopoly is replaced by a People's Government, pledged to nationalise the key industries and to industrialise the country. Darkness will continue to reign in the villages unless bureaucratic rule gives place to real democracy ensuring the fullest freedom, and, in particular, the freedom of organisation to peasants, land-labourers and workers.

WAY TO A FREE AND PROSPEROUS PUNJAB

The Communist Party places in the forefront of its plan of reconstructing the Punjab's village and its food economy on just and democratic foundations, the slogan of *abolishing Jagirdari*.

Jagirdari imposes a shameful serfdom on the *muzara*. It

is the bane of democracy, a shackle on production. It is imperialism's creation to prop up its autocratic rule.

Landlordism must be abolished and the entire land in the Punjab must be nationalised. The present tenants on the landlords' acres must be given the land they now occupy in permanence for tillage, paying land revenue in the same way as other peasant-proprietors do.

Jagirdars and landlords must not be allowed to retain more than a hundred acres of their land for themselves, which they till themselves or by hired labour.

The fallow land of the zemindar as well as that of the Government shall be utilised to consolidate the uneconomic holdings of the poor peasants and make them economic.

All fallow lands available in the *shamlat* (village common land), *rakhs* (game forests) and the Crown lands—which together make 8 lakh acres—shall be used to give economic holdings to landless labourers and peasants as well as to demobilised soldiers. The newly settled peasants should be supplied with bullocks, seeds, implements, housing material and cash credit.

The nationalisation of land shall mean that land cannot be bought and sold. This does not deprive the peasant of his land, as the Akalis fraudulently propagate. Nationalisation would for the first time give land in permanence to the bulk of the tenants who are without any rights on land today. It would prevent the rich peasants from buying away land from the needy poor peasants. The peasant-proprietor would get his holding enlarged at the expense of the landlords' fallow land. He would be more secure in the possession of his land than before. Nationalisation would give land to the 16 lakh *muzara* families. It would give land also to many of the eight lakh landless labourers.

Under nationalisation, land cannot be leased. Every zemindar will have to till his land by his own and others' labour.

The Punjab has, besides the Crown lands, 149 lakh acres of cultivable waste which can be made arable either by irrigation, afforestation, anti-erosion measures or by deep ploughing,

etc. The State must take the necessary measures to reclaim such land and settle on it the landless labourers and the aboriginal tribes, supplying them with the initial help for tilling, and giving them cash credit.

Our second slogan is "*End all usury.*" Wipe out the old debt on the back of the poor peasant owed by him to the *mahajan*, settle other debts by joint conciliation boards. Ban all private money-lending and make credit available to the peasant through publicly-owned co-operative credit banks.

Our third slogan is "*Replace the present land revenue system by a land-income tax, which is steeply graded so that uneconomic holdings are exempted from all tax, while higher incomes are heavily taxed.*"

Our fourth slogan is "*Ban all private trade in food-grains.*" A network of sale-purchase co-operatives publicly-owned, buys from the peasants, stores it and sells at reasonable prices to the city consumers. The same co-operatives ensure the supply of manufactured necessities required by the peasant at fair prices. This does away with the trader-hoarders, and ensures the peasant a fair price for his produce, and food for all. This will affect only the big wholesalers and merchants. All the small retail traders will be absorbed in the co-operative net as employees and store-keepers on a living wage.

These are the main pillars of a plan to transform the present serf village into a free village. This plan together with the nationalisation of industries must form a part of the programme of every patriotic party which demands the independence of India and a People's Government. This above all will free the peasant—the producer—from the triple load of the landlord, the money-lender and the hoarder and thus clear the path for building a movement for co-operative large-scale farming run by machinery.

In other words, only by removing these obstacles will the liberated peasant be able, in unity with the workers and the democratic masses of the country, to build a free and happy village community, running large-scale, machine-run co-operative farms and thus create plenty and prosperity for all.

IMMEDIATE MEASURES

The immediate measures to be taken by any interim Government as preparatory to carrying out these changes are:

1. Ban ejection of *muzaras* by landlords, and fix the rent or *batai* not to exceed *one-quarter* of the net produce (after deducting all costs of production including the wages of the cultivator himself) or twice the land revenue, whichever is less.
2. All *begar*—free work for landlords—and illegal cesses to be abolished and to be penalised.
3. All arable fallow land in *shamlat*, *rakhs* and Crown lands to be at once made available to landless peasants and demobilised war service peasants and labourers, for cultivation.
4. All old *mahajan* debts of poor peasants and *muzaras* with uneconomic holdings to be cancelled.
5. Income tax on agricultural incomes to be levied on *jagirdars*' income, so as to leave them with not more than Rs. 6,000 a year out of the rental collected by them.

6. Irrigation

- (a) Private ownership in canals (as in the case of the *Tiwanas*' canals in Shahpur) to be abolished.
- (b) Canal water rates to be only slightly higher than the current expenses and the income derived thereby to be spent on improvement and expansion of the canal system.
- (c) Canal Advisory Committees should be elected bodies on all *rajbahs* and branches.
- (d) Every water rate payer and the tenants on the canal-irrigated lands to be voters for the purpose of electing Canal Committees.
- (e) These Committees to have recommendatory powers regarding remission of water rate, repairs, improvements, regulation of boundaries, remodelling of distributaries and checking of corruption in the staff.

Reclamation

- (a) To check water-logging the canal banks should be lined.
- (b) More effective steps should be taken to reclaim *sem* and

thur lands (lands rendered useless as a result of water-logging and salt-effervescence).

Stopping the Cho Havoc

The Government efforts now being made are extremely tardy and ineffective. The scheme as it is worked at present has proved harmful instead of helpful. Speedier and more effective steps should be taken to stop deterioration of land effected by these nullahs.

Doaba Canal

The universally demanded Doaba seasonal canal should be dug at the earliest moment in order to raise the water level. In the meanwhile, the water of the Beas should be stored by erecting bunds at several convenient places.

7. All police chowkies to be abolished—all punitive police to be withdrawn.

8. Adult franchise for district boards and *panchayats*. Nomination and the official veto to be abolished.

9. The peasant to be ensured a fair price for his produce.

10. Freedom of organisation to peasants and workers.

11. All social oppression on *kammins* to be stopped.

How will the Communist Party work to realise these demands?

Through building a powerful kisan movement embracing the poor and middle peasants and agricultural labourers.

Through building the patriotic unity of the people to carry out this plan.

This can be done, because this reorganisation of the agrarian economy is in the interests of all the people except a handful of landlords, money-lenders and trader-hoarders, and of course the imperialists. It is a programme which the patriotic movement of our country can and must carry out as part of its struggle to rebuild free India.

On this basis, we can build a free and democratic Punjab.

State Budget Of The USSR For 1945

BY A. G. ZVEREV *

COMRADES DEPUTIES ! THE STATE BUDGET OF THE U.S.S.R. FOR 1945, which is being submitted for your consideration and approval, aims fully to cover the financial needs of the front and provides for expenditures necessary for the rehabilitation of the economy of the liberated areas which was wrecked by the German occupationists, and for the further development of the national economy and culture of our country.

Execution Of The State Budget For 1943 And 1944

Permit me first of all to dwell upon the execution of the state budget of the U.S.S.R. for 1943 and upon the preliminary returns on the execution of the state budget of the U.S.S.R. for 1944. The 10th Session of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. heard the preliminary returns for the budget for 1943. Now the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. submits for your approval an account of the execution of the 1943 budget. The state budget for 1943 was fulfilled in the sum of 210,000 million rubles on both revenue and expenditure sides.

The 10th Session of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. approved the state budget for 1944 at 249,600 million rubles revenue and at an equal amount for expenditures. According to preliminary data, the revenues amounted to 268,000 million rubles, or 107.4% of the approved sum, and expenditures to 263,000 million rubles, or 105.4%. As a result, the state budget of the U.S.S.R. for 1944 was fulfilled with an excess of revenues over expenditures amounting to 5,000 million rubles.

The successful fulfilment of the state budget is first of all the result of the defeat of the fascist hordes by our valiant Red Army, and their expulsion from our country. The summary

*From the Report delivered by A. G. Zverev, People's Commissar of Finance of the U.S.S.R. at the joint sitting of the Soviet of the Union and Soviet of Nationalities on April 24, 1945.—Editor.

of the fulfilment of the 1944 budget is striking evidence that our Soviet state, which has created, under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, a smooth-running and rapidly developing war economy, possesses a firm financial foundation. Based upon the might of our Socialist economy as a whole, Soviet finances are playing a tremendous role during the Great Patriotic War in mobilizing resources for the conduct of war and for the financing of the national economy and expenditures on culture, as well as in exercising state control over effective utilization of material and financial means throughout the entire national economy.

During the three and a half years of the war, that is, up to and including 1944, budget expenditures for financing the People's Commissariats of Defence and the Navy exceeded 420,000 million rubles. In 1944 war expenditures increased by nearly 13,000 million rubles as compared with 1943. At the same time, substantial sums from the state budget were allocated for rehabilitation of the liberated districts and for the further development of the national economy and culture of the U.S.S.R.

The financial might of our Socialist state has grown still stronger during the war years. This has demonstrated the unshakable stability of the economic foundations of our state, the self-sacrifice and labour heroism of the Soviet people, the great organizational work conducted during the war years by the Party and the Government under the guidance of our brilliant leader and teacher, the great Stalin.

Budget revenue for 1944 increased as compared with 1943 by 58,000 million rubles, or 27.6%. This increase was made up mainly by revenue from state enterprises and organisations.

Profits tax from state enterprises and turnover tax accounted for 116,100 million rubles revenue in 1944 as against 91,100 million rubles in 1943. The increased revenue under these items was the result mainly of the increased volume of output and the further reduction of production costs.

According to preliminary data, the cost of industrial production dropped in 1944 by 3%, with the greatest reduction in the war industry and the machine-building industry. In the aircraft industry, for instance, cost of production was reduced by 7.3% in comparison with 1943, in the tank industry by 12.8%, in the armaments industry by 7.6%, in the machine tool industry by 9.8%, and in the electrical industry by 9.9%.

The reduction in the cost of industrial production is the result of the considerable increase achieved in the productivity of

labour, and of economy in the expenditure of raw materials, fuel and other supplies. In the tank industry, productivity of labour increased by 23.7% over 1943, in the aircraft industry by 11.8% and in the food industry by 16.6%. These successes in increasing productivity of labour were achieved by further perfection of technology and organization of production, extensive introduction of the direct production line method and a new upsurge in Socialist emulation in the factories and mills.

An important source of revenue to finance the increasing expenditures of the state is the influx of funds from the population. In 1944, state tax revenue from the population amounted to 37,200 million rubles as against 28,600 million rubles in 1943. The increase in these items was determined mainly by the growth of the number of tax-payers and the increased wages of workers and other employees, as well as the higher money income of collective farmers. Subscriptions to the Third State War Loan, which was floated at 25,000 million rubles, amounted almost to 29,000 million rubles. The Fourth Lottery Issue was also successfully placed and brought in 5,200 million rubles. These figures testify to the splendid patriotism of the Soviet people, who are doing their utmost to speed the final defeat of the enemy.

"Soviet people." Comrade Stalin has said, "have denied themselves many necessities, have consciously incurred serious material privations in order to give more for the front."

As in the previous war years, state budget funds were directed in the main at covering war expenditures. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR approved the expenditures of the People's Commissariats of Defence and the Navy for 1944 at 128,400 million rubles; actual expenditures amounted to 137,900 million rubles.

In making a preliminary summary of the financing of the Red Army, we must note the substantial aid in armaments, materials and food for the Red Army which was rendered in 1944, as well as during the current year, by our Allies.

In spite of the wartime conditions, Soviet people are conducting extensive constructive work to restore economy in the formerly occupied areas and to further develop the productive forces of the country. In 1944 expenditures on capital construction amounted to 29,000 million rubles, including 23,000 million rubles under the budget.

As has been pointed out, considerable allocations were made

million rubles in 1944. The greatest increase in profits is outlined in industry, amounting to 2,600 million rubles.

Fulfilment of the plan for accumulation demands further perfection of the technique and organization of production and wide-scale dissemination of the experience gained by the best enterprises. The fulfilment of this plan demands economy in the expenditure of materials, fuel, electric power and in wages, as well as the reduction of spoilage, wastage and other unproductive expenditures.

Comrade Stalin teaches us that in order to increase accumulations in the national economy it is necessary to "do away with mismanagement, mobilize the internal resources of industry, to introduce and strengthen cost accounting in all of our enterprises, systematically to cut production costs, to increase internal accumulations in all branches of industry without exception."

During the war years, industry has effected a great saving by cutting production costs. According to approximate calculations, the saving accruing from the reduction of production costs of comparable output amounted to about 50,000 million rubles during three and a half years of war.

Numerous examples may be cited of remarkable successes in the operation of industrial enterprises. I shall mention, for instance, the plant directed by Comrade Okulov. The personnel of this plant has worked stubbornly to improve technology and to introduce the direct production line method, achieving a sharp drop in labour required for many operations. Productivity of labour increased in 1944 by 31% above 1943. As a result, the plant reduced production costs by 10.5% in comparison with 1943, instead of the 8.7% called for by plan, receiving 21 million rubles profit instead of the planned 12 million rubles. At the plant where Hero of Socialist Labour Comrade Gonor is director, productivity of labour rose in 1944 by 24% above 1943, while production costs dropped by 22%. Thanks to thrift in the utilization of state funds, the factory earned about five million rubles profits more than the plan called for in 1944. Another example is the factory where Comrade Gorshunov is director. Here the cost of producing the plant's main item of production was cut by 28% in the course of 1944 as compared with 1943. The cost of producing another item was cut almost by half.

Nevertheless, there still are many enterprises where excessive expenditure of raw and other materials and fuel as well as large losses in spoilage and other unproductive expenses are sys-

tematically countenanced. More than that, there are some enterprises where losses last year even increased as against 1943. For instance, at the factory where Comrade Dalinger is director, losses from spoilage in the production of one of its most important items, which in 1943 made up four per cent of the factory cost of production, amounted almost to nine per cent in 1944. At the factory directed by Comrade Gusyev, losses in spoilage increased from 12.5% in 1943 to 17% in 1944. As a result, the cost of production at this plant increased. The factory finished the year with a loss of almost seven million rubles whereas the plan called for 3,500,000 rubles profits. Management like this by some heads of enterprises is to the detriment of the national economy. In wartime the struggle for economy, for stricter cost accounting and financial discipline, for the fulfilment of the budget, the struggle against mismanagement, is a major requisite for the mobilization of the resources of the state for final victory over the enemy, for the further development of the national economy.

It must also be noted that poor accounting and book-keeping delays prevent the managers of economic organizations from discovering excessive production expenditures fully and in good time and from taking measures to eliminate them. At a number of factories, materials are often turned over to the production shop without adequate recording. Materials used in production as well as wages paid are included in the cost of production of the goods put out in keeping with the established rates, while both economy or excessive expenditures are accounted to unfinished production until the end of the year. As a result of such inaccurate accounting, the cost of production and profitability in the course of the year are presented in a favourable light, while large losses may be disclosed at the end of the year. Thus, owing to unsatisfactory accounting, the quarterly reports put out by the Kuibyshev Machine Tool Works showed a 5.8% reduction in the cost of production during the first nine months of 1944, whereas after an inventory was taken it was seen that there had been no reduction whatsoever; on the contrary, the cost of production had during this period somewhat exceeded the 1943 level.

Owing to unsatisfactory accounting, some enterprises do not take timely measures to trace undelivered freights which sometimes may be on the road for many months on end. Thus, the Moscow Meat Packing Plant is still "waiting" for 108,000 rubles

worth of meat products from Ulan-Ude which were shipped as far back as May 1943.

The managers and head book-keepers of enterprises must realize that control over the fulfilment of production plans and the fulfilment of requirements as regards reducing cost of production are impossible without a decided improvement in book-keeping and accounting. Managers and head book-keepers of enterprises must carefully analyze accounts and eliminate in good time everything that hampers the fulfilment of plan.

REVENUE FROM THE POPULATION

As in previous war years, in 1945, too, influx of funds from the population in taxes and loans made up a considerable part of the state budget revenue. In proportion to the increase in the number of persons employed in the various branches of the national economy, state tax revenue for 1945 has been set at 45,300 million rubles, or 8,100 million rubles more than in 1944. The bulk of this revenue comes from war tax, which amounts to 24,400 million rubles. Considerable funds are also to come in in agricultural and income taxes.

The great significance to the national economy and the tremendous popularity of Soviet state loans placed among the population are generally known. The floatation of state loans in our country invariably turns into a demonstration of Soviet patriotism. With particular force was this manifested by the subscription to the Third State War Loan, which, as I have already pointed out, was successfully placed in an exceedingly brief space of time.

It is planned to issue in 1945 the Fourth State War Loan at the sum of 25,000 million rubles. There is no doubt that the new loan will meet with the full support of the entire Soviet people.

It should be observed that this year it is expected that the balance of savings banks deposits will increase by 1,400 million rubles; the balance of savings deposited by the population increased by 856 million rubles last year.

As has been pointed out above, the 1945 budget exceeds 300,000 million rubles. The successful fulfilment of such an extensive financial programme demands further improvement in the work of the entire finance apparatus. There can be no doubt that under the leadership of the Party and the Government the

finance bodies will carry out with honour the important tasks entrusted to them.

FINANCING WAR EXPENDITURES

Comrades Deputies! The day when Hitlerite Germany will have been utterly defeated is near. However, seeing that he is doomed to perish, the enemy is resisting desperately. To break this resistance and to consummate victory over the enemy, it is necessary to further intensify our efforts and to mobilize all the material and financial resources of our state.

In the budget of the U.S.S.R. for 1945 which has been submitted for your approval, expenditures for financing the People's Commissariats of Defence and the Navy have been set at 137,900 million rubles, which makes up 45.1% of the expenditures under the budget this year.

FINANCING NATIONAL ECONOMY

Expenditures under the state budget for financing the national economy have been set at 64,600 million rubles, as against 49,000 million rubles in 1944, or an increase of 31.8%. This considerable increase of expenditures on financing the national economy is one of the characteristic features of the state budget of the U.S.S.R. for 1945. The above total appropriations are distributed among the various branches of the national economy as follows (in thousands of millions of rubles) :

<i>Item</i>	<i>Expenditure in 1944 (preli- minary data)</i>	1945	<i>Increase in</i>
Total for national economy of which :	49,0	64.6	31.8
Industry	27.3	35.9	31.5
Agriculture	7.0	9.2	31.4
Transport and communications	7.7	9.8	27.3
Trade and state purchases	1.2	1.7	41.7
Public utilities and housing	1.8	2.9	61.1

The increased expenditures for financing the national economy in 1945 are due in the main to the growth of allocations for capital construction and first and foremost for reconstruction in the liberated areas. The financing of capital investments increases from 29,000 million rubles in 1944 to 40,100 million

rubles in 1945. Budget appropriations for capital investments are set at 31,200 million rubles.

Fascist Germany has caused tremendous damage to the national economy of the Soviet Union. In the temporarily-occupied areas the Hitlerites wrecked industrial buildings and other structures, equipment, collective farm structures, railway lines, stations and rolling stock, housing and public utilities, schools, hospitals and other cultural institutions. Almost half of the 40,100 million rubles earmarked in 1945 for capital investments is to be routed into restoration work.

One of the most important construction tasks of 1945 is the restoration and reconstruction of heavy industry in the liberated areas, in the first place of the southern coal and iron and steel producers. Large funds are assigned also for the restoration of transport, machine and tractor stations, housing and public utilities.

The fulfilment of the capital works programme outlined for 1945 makes it incumbent upon our economic organizations to devote serious attention to cutting the cost of construction. Banks handling long-term investments must exercise stricter control over the utilization of funds assigned for capital development. One of the most important tasks is regulation of the cost of planning of construction and installation work as well as improvement of book-keeping and accountancy at construction jobs.

The growth of production in 1945 requires that economic organizations increase their own working capital. The extent of this capital needed by enterprises in all branches of the national economy has been set at 66,000 million rubles in 1945 as against 59,200 million rubles in 1944, which means an increase of 6,800 million rubles, including 3,200 million rubles allocated in the state budget.

Our state enterprises and organizations have at their disposal large amounts of working capital. During the years of the war the turnover of funds at many enterprises noticeably speeded up, particularly in the war industry and in the machinery industry. Nevertheless, far from all the working capital is made use of with sufficient efficacy. Many managers do not devote sufficient attention to the finances of the enterprises they lead, which often results in freezing of state funds in unnecessary stocks and in debits. Facts like this can be observed even at some enterprises of the war and machine-building industries. For instance, the plant where Comrade Novoselov is director, had at the be-

ginning of 1945 stocks of roller bearings equivalent to more than two years' requirements. The plant directed by Comrade Shevchenko had on Jan. 1, 1945, 28 million rubles' worth of unnecessary excess materials, including critical non-ferrous metals valued at 17 million rubles. At the plant where Comrade Novikov is director, 22 tons of lacquer paints and 100 cubic meters of aircraft plywood have been lying around unused for about two years. Is there any need to stress that the accumulation of excess stocks cannot possibly be tolerated, all the more so in wartime?

Increased productivity of labour, perfection of technique and organisation of production have created the prerequisites for speeding up the turnover of goods and other material values. Stocks at enterprises must be brought into conformity with actual needs.

In this connection it is necessary to dwell upon one more question. I have in view the increase in outstanding accounts payable and accounts receivable. Many enterprises, though they have sufficient working capital, nevertheless delay payments to suppliers, the People's Commissariat of Finance and the State Bank, and sometimes even hold up the payment of wages. Some managers of enterprises and head book-keepers have become accustomed to sizable accounts payable and accounts receivable outstanding, reconciling themselves even with a state of affairs when bills for shipped goods are not made out in the proper time. This indebtedness must be cleaned up and it must not be allowed to grow in the future. Stricter control over accounting is one of the most immediate tasks confronting the workers of credit establishments.

Increased discipline in accounting likewise demands radical improvement in the work of accounting and finance departments of enterprises and greater attention to these questions on the part of the managers of enterprises and organizations.

FINANCIAL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MEASURES

The state budget of the U.S.S.R. for 1945 also provides for an increase in expenditures for social and cultural measures. These expenditures will increase from 51,100 million rubles in 1944 to 66,100 million rubles in 1945, or by 15,000 million rubles. Appropriations for the various social and cultural measures are distributed as follows (in millions of rubles):

<i>Item of Expenditure</i>	<i>Expenditure in 1944 (preli- minary data)</i>	1945	<i>Increase in %</i>
Education	20,440	28,591	39.9
Public health and physical culture	10,210	13,194	29.2
State social insurance	3,856	5,202	34.9
State grants to mothers of large families and unmarried mothers	872	1,407	61.3
Social welfare	15,686	17,695	12.8

Elementary and secondary school enrolment in 1945 will be 2,800,000 or 11.1% more than in 1944. Accordingly, appropriations for elementary and secondary schools in 1945 will increase by 2,100 million rubles as against 1944.

Financing of institutions of higher learning will increase considerably. Expenditures for their maintenance are to comprise 2,856 million rubles in 1945 as compared to 2,036 million rubles in 1944. Simultaneously, expenditures for secondary technical schools will increase from 1,404 million rubles in 1944 to 2,276 million rubles in 1945.

The increase in appropriations for institutions of higher learning and secondary technical schools is called forth by the greater demand for specialists. A number of educational establishments on the territory liberated from German occupation are resuming their activity; likewise, new higher educational establishments and secondary technical schools are being founded. At the end of 1945 higher school enrolment will be 561,000, and secondary technical school enrolment, 938,000. The number of students at higher schools will be 28% more than in 1944, and at secondary technical schools, 30.3% more. In 1945 higher school enrolment is approaching the pre-war level.

Training of skilled workers is a major requisite for increasing labour productivity and insuring a further rise in the volume of production. In wartime big successes have been achieved in training such cadres. The industrial training schools and trade schools have furnished industry, the transport services and other branches of economy with about 1,800,000 workers. The rise in volume of production in 1945 demands a further increase in the contingents trained in the vocational schools and industrial training schools. By the end of 1945 enrolment in these schools is to comprise 867,000, as compared to 797,000 in 1944.

The maintenance of the pupils of these schools is being improved.

Accordingly, appropriations for training labour reserves in 1945 are fixed at 3,321 million rubles instead of 2,660 million rubles in 1944. This represents an increase of 661 million rubles.

Appropriations are being increased for training new industrial workers and for advancing training for workers already employed. In 1945 appropriations for this purpose under the Union budget will be 659 million rubles, or 54% more than the 1944 expenditures. A similar amount will be expended by the economic organizations from their own funds.

The creative efforts of our scientific institutions have contributed much to consolidating the military might of the Soviet Union. The Party, the Government and Comrade Stalin personally devote constant and considerable attention to the development of scientific thought in our country. Expenditures for scientific research institutes and institutions in 1945 are being increased by 50% over last year.

In 1944 the Government adopted a number of measures aimed at improving mass cultural and educational work in town and village. Expenditures for these measures in 1945 will be double the 1944 figure.

A considerable extension in the network of children's institutions—children's homes, kindergartens, nurseries—is likewise provided for in 1945. Budget expenditures for financing children's homes are fixed at 2,237 million rubles, as compared to 1,518 million rubles in 1944. Outlays for the maintenance of kindergartens are to be 2,045 million rubles, or 600 million rubles more than in 1944.

If we add to this the fact that in 1945 state expenditures for allowances to mothers of large families and to unmarried mothers will increase by more than 500 million rubles as compared to 1944, the great attention paid by the Party and the Government to the welfare of mothers and to child upbringing will become clear.

Our country is faced with big tasks in the field of health protection.* The number of accommodations in hospitals, maternity homes and children's nurseries is being enlarged in order to improve medical service for the urban and rural population. Disease prevention and treatment are being extended. Accordingly, health appropriations under the state budget will increase from

10,200 million rubles in 1944 to 13,200 million rubles in 1945.

The state budget provides for large expenditures for social welfare—17,700 million rubles, as compared to 15,700 million rubles in 1944. This includes allowances and pensions for servicemen and their families.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENDITURES

Expenditures for maintaining state administrative bodies in 1945 are planned at 9,500 million rubles, of which 3,100 million rubles come under the Union budget and 6,400 million rubles under the state budgets of the Union republics. Expenditures for the state administrative apparatus increase by 2,200 million rubles as compared to 1944, chiefly for the maintenance of administrative bodies in the districts liberated from the German invaders.

In wartime the administrative apparatus and expenditures for its maintenance have been notably curtailed. The curtailing of the administrative apparatus furnished our industry, the transport services and other branches of economy with a certain amount of additional man-power. However, in a number of cases, quite an amount of superfluous funds are still spent for maintaining the administrative apparatus. Heads of enterprises and institutions should pay more attention to improving the work of the apparatus and to curtailing administrative expenditures to the minimum.

Some of the deputies who spoke at the 10th Session of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. pointed to the necessity of improving control auditing by the People's Commissariat of Finance of the U.S.S.R. In the period between the 10th and 11th sessions the work of the control auditing apparatus has improved perceptibly. In 1944, 95,000 auditings were carried out, as compared to 66,000 in 1943 and 17,000 in 1942. In 1944 the books of twice as many budget organizations were checked as in 1943. The number of auditings in economic organizations increased several times over. Increased auditing has led to stricter adherence to budget in a number of organizations.

I must say that the auditing revealed a number of absolutely intolerable instances of a negligent attitude to state funds. A particularly large number of violations of financial regulations was disclosed in organizations of the commissariats where inner-departmental control is on a poor footing.

The important tasks of fulfilling the state budget of the

U.S.S.R. for 1945 demand strengthening of state control in all the links of the national economy.

REPUBLICAN AND LOCAL BUDGETS

Comrades Deputies ! The state budget of the U.S.S.R. for 1945 is the first in wartime to include the budgets of all the Union republics with all their territory. This is a result of the great victories of our valorous Red Army.

The total of the state budgets of the Union republics for 1945 is fixed at 52,200 million rubles. This is an increase of 14,500 million rubles, or 38.6%, over 1944. This increase is determined chiefly by a rise in the expenditures of the Union republics liberated from occupation. The budgets of these republics—the Ukrainian, Belorussian, Moldavian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian and Karelian-Finnish—increase by 112.3%. The budgets of the other Union republics increase by 22.3%.

Going over to the budgets of the various republics, I consider it necessary to announce that the Council of People's Commissioners of the U.S.S.R. has fulfilled the assignment given it by the 10th Session of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. to consider the budgets of the Moldavian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Union republics for 1944.

The budgets of the above-mentioned republics were considered and approved, and the funds required to cover their expenditures were allotted from the Union budget.

The state budgets for the various Union republics for 1945 are presented as follows (in millions of rubles) :

<i>Union Republic</i>	<i>Expenditure in 1944 (preli- minary data)</i>	<i>1945</i>	<i>Increase in %</i>
RSFSR	23,556	28,588	21.4
Ukrainian SSR	5,355	9,124	70.4
Belorussian SSR	720	2,377	230.1
Azerbaijan SSR	971	1,183	21.8
Georgian SSR	1,223	1,456	19.0
Armenian SSR	572	650	13.6
Turkmenian SSR	417	516	23.7
Uzbek SSR	1,719	2,160	25.7
Tajik SSR	498	651	30.7
Kazakh SSR	1,437	1,885	31.2

Kirghiz SSR	407	562	38.1
Karelian-Finnish SSR	153	288	88.3
Moldavian SSR	170	540	217.7
Lithuanian SSR	169	728	330.8
Latvian SSR	156	792	407.7
Estonian SSR	130	698	436.9
Total	37,653	52,198	38.6

The increase in the budgets of the Union republics in the fourth year of the war bespeaks further successes of the Lenin-Stalin national policy. The indivisible friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union has become still stronger in the years of the Great Patriotic War. The fraternal collaboration of the peoples of the Soviet Union is one of the most important sources of our country's might.

In 1945 the revenues of the Union republics increase both on account of larger appropriations from the all-Union revenues as well as of larger revenues from the local economy. Revenues from the profits tax on republican and local enterprises and economic organizations are increased. In 1945 they are to comprise 6,800 million rubles, that is, an increase of 323 million rubles as compared to 1944. Another substantial source of republican and local budget revenue are local taxes and levies. In 1945 revenues from this source in all the Union republics should be more than 6,000 million rubles.

To strengthen the revenue of the republics that were temporarily occupied, and to insure reconstruction of the local economy and national culture, subsidies from the Union budget in the amount of 3,780 million rubles are provided. The subsidies provided for the various republics are as follows: the Ukrainian SSR, 1,500 million rubles; the Belorussian SSR, 1,200 million rubles; the Karelian-Finnish SSR, 80 million rubles; the Moldavian SSR, 300 million rubles; the Lithuanian SSR, 200 million rubles; the Latvian SSR, 200 million rubles; the Estonian SSR, 300 million rubles.

In the expenditures of the Union republics, large sums are earmarked for financing the national economy. Total expenditures for financing the national economy are fixed at 9,200 million rubles, as compared to 6,200 million rubles in 1944, or an increase of 48.4%. This increase is in line with the task of speedy reconstruction of local industry, municipal economy and

the roads in the republics liberated from German occupation. It also insures further development and consolidation of the local and municipal economy in the other Union republics.

The sum of 3,400 million rubles is assigned in 1945 for financing capital construction. Almost half of this sum will be spent in the republics liberated from the German invaders.

The increase in the republican and local economic organizations' own working capital in 1945 is fixed at 1,400 million rubles. Budget allotments for replenishing working funds comprise about 800 million rubles.

As is known, the chief expenditures of the Union republics are for social and cultural measures. In 1945 these are planned at 34,800 million rubles, as compared to 25,800 million rubles in 1944. This is an increase of 34.9%.

Expenditures for education increase from 13,900 million rubles in 1944 to 19,700 million rubles in 1945, or by 5,800 million rubles. Health protection expenditures increase from 9,100 million rubles to 11,800 million rubles, and for social welfare, from 2,800 million rubles to 3,300 million rubles.

Of the total increase of 9,000 million rubles for financing social and cultural measures, 4,600 million rubles is for financing cultural measures in the liberated republics.

To strengthen the republican and local budgets, it is planned to increase the allocations from the state loan and the war tax. Allocations from the state loan for the budget of the RSFSR are increased from 15% to 25%, and for the budgets of the other Union republics, from 15% to 50%. Allocations from the war tax for the budgets of the Union republics, with the exception of the RSFSR, are increased from 5% to 15%.

The state budget of the USSR for 1945 submitted for your approval provides for mobilization of funds for the victorious issue of the Great Patriotic War, for reconstruction of the wrecked economy in the liberated districts, for further consolidation and development of our country's national economy and culture.

A Note On Chotanagpur And Its People

BY A. K. GHOSE

INTRODUCTION

CHOTANAGPUR Division, which lies in the south of Bihar, has an area of 27,112 sq. miles. It is a part of the Chotanagpur plateau which includes, besides Chotanagpur Division, the district of Santhal Parganas, a large number of Orissa states and also the Chhattisgarh States Agency—altogether an area well over 60,000 sq. miles. Almost the whole tract except for small parts in the east in Manbhum is hilly and was, till about a hundred years ago, largely covered with forests.

No big river crosses the tract, all the streams and rivers that it has are rain-fed and dry up in summer. The soil is hard and far less fertile than in Bihar proper. But the plateau is enormously rich in mineral resources—by far the largest known deposits of coal, iron and copper in the whole country being concentrated here. Mica, dolomite, lead and aluminium are also found. Large areas, especially in the states, have not yet been properly surveyed and are believed to be rich in minerals.

It is this factor which gives this territory and its political and economic future a significance which is vital for our whole country. A movement has grown here during the last few years with the avowed aim of separating Chotanagpur from Bihar and constituting it into a separate province. For understanding this movement and for adopting a correct attitude towards it, it is necessary to know the social, economic and political background in which it has grown. That is what I shall try to do in this report.

I. The Aboriginals of Chotanagpur

Chotanagpur Division has five districts—Palamu, Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Manbhum and Singhbhum. Within its boundaries are two small states, Saraikela and Khasrwan. The total population is 77,21,773 (1941 *Census Tables*). Of these the aborigines or *Adibasis* form 44%. Their proportion would be much higher if

we include the Santhal Parganas and the surrounding states where they preponderate.

AREA		Total Popu- lation	Tribal Popu- lation
Chotanagpur	..	75,16,349	33,21,224
Saraikela and Khasrwan	..	2,05,424	1,09,781
Santhal Parganas	..	22,34,497	11,29,885
States of Mayurbhanj, Gangpur, Bonai, Chhattisgarh States Agency	..	25,23,520	18,00,553
TOTAL	..	1,24,79,790	63,61,443

In this large and contiguous area therefore, the aborigines number over 63½ lacs and form more than 50% of the population. Their total number in India is nearly 3.54 crores. Of them nearly one-fourth live in this tract--by far the largest concentration of aborigines in the whole country.

These figures have been challenged by some Hindu Sabha leaders who allege that the number of aborigines was so large in Census figures of 1941 because many Hindus were counted as aborigines in order to reduce the numerical strength of the Hindus and aid Christian missionaries in their proselytising activities (see *Religious Banditry* published by Arya Dharma Seva Sangh). The main evidence they produce is that in 1931 the number of aborigines was shown to be only 76 lacs while in 1941 it reached over 2½ crores, an obviously fantastic increase.

This criticism does not bear scrutiny. Even in 1931 (*Census Report* Vol. I, Part I) the total number of aborigines in India was shown to be 2.23 crores. It was stated that of these only 76 lacs were adherents of tribal religions, the overwhelming majority of the rest had become Hinduised and many had become Christians. The only valid criticism that can be made is that in 1941 all members of primitive tribes were classed under a single head. That this is the real grievance is seen in a resolution adopted by the Hindu Mahasabha Working Committee in October 1944 which expressed "great pain and resentment" that in the "*Census Report of 1941 the aboriginal tribes which were till then included in Hindus*" were lumped together with non-Hindu aborigines to the detriment of the Hindu community.

The question that naturally arises is : who are the people who should be classed as aborigines ? If only the adherents of

the various tribal religions were to be considered aborigines, their number in the whole country would not exceed 80 lacs or so. But that would be obviously misleading, for even in Chotanagpur, where aborigines have to a great extent preserved their own languages and their characteristic customs, more than half of them have become Hinduised and tens of thousands have embraced Christianity. Language would be another criterion but even that would not be conclusive, for not possessing any script of their own and being subjected to long influence of Bengalis, Biharis, Oriyas etc., many of the aborigines have partially, and in some instances even completely, adopted the language of their neighbours. Besides, many of them have learned to speak Bengali, Hindi and Oriya and due to carelessness (or sympathy) of the enumerators—as the *Census Reports* say—were shown to have these languages as their mother tongue.

In view of these difficulties the procedure adopted in the 1941 Census was to class all those who belonged to certain castes and tribes under a single head—"Primitive Tribes"—irrespective of the religions they followed and the languages they spoke. Whatever criticism may be levelled against this method, even Hindu Sabha leaders, as I have shown, do not challenge the statement that these tribes are really aboriginal.

An important and numerically large community in Chotanagpur—the *Kurmi Mahtos*—were formerly classed as aborigines or semi-aboriginals. They number nearly 7 lacs, of whom 3½ lacs live in Manbhum. If they are to be classed as aborigines, the percentage of aborigines in Chotanagpur would be well over 50. They are, the *Census Report* of 1931 says, different from the Kurmis of Bihar who do not recognise them as Kurmi and do not intermarry with them. Also that the "distinctive Kolarian village system" found among aboriginal tribes prevails among them also.

But the Kurmi Mahtos (the word *Mahto* like *Munda* means headman) in 1930 raised a strong protest against their being classified as aborigines. They claimed they were Kshatriyas who came to Chotanagpur some centuries ago and though the proof they advanced in support of this claim was "not very convincing" they were excluded from the category of aborigines in 1941 Census figures. The Kurmi Mahtos now mostly use the sacred thread, have given up eating fowl and imitate higher-class Hindus in every respect. But materially and culturally they are little better than Depressed Class Hindus and some aboriginal tribes. They are mostly cultivators.

This example will show how difficult is the task of assessing the real number of aborigines. But that there is an aboriginal problem, no one who knows anything about the matter will deny. And the problem is not merely racial or religious. It is economic, social and cultural, and above all, political. Whatever religion many of the aborigines may have embraced, whatever claims some of them may make to be high caste Hindus, whatever language many of them may have picked up—the one fact about which there can be no dispute is that socially, economically and culturally they are the most oppressed, the most degraded and the most backward section of our people. Politically also they have remained backward, less affected by the national movement than perhaps any other section.

I do not intend here to write a report on the aboriginal question as a whole. That would require careful investigation and thorough study. I shall confine myself to Chotanagpur and deal with the aboriginal problem as a part of the Chotanagpur problem.

II. History

EARLY HISTORY

It is generally believed that the primitive races who lived in India prior to the Aryan invasion, when pressed hard by the new colonists, retreated into mountain and forest tracts and a number of these—first of all the Mundas—made the interior of Chotanagpur their home. While the rest of the country came under Aryan sway long before Muslim invasion, Chotanagpur, because of the poor nature of its soil, absence of large rivers and the hilly nature of the country, remained a tribal fastness till a few hundred years ago. By Hindus and Muslims alike, this area was known as *Jharkhand* or "Forest Tract" and no attempt was made to penetrate the country beyond the outer fringes of Hazaribagh, Palamau and Manbhum. During the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir, Mughal armies defeated the Raja who reigned here and made him a tributary chief but practically nothing was done to bring the country under effective control. Though nominally a part of the *Suba* of Bihar it remained independent for all practical purposes till about 200 years ago.

How this Raja who claims to be a Rajput came here is a matter which has been the subject of much speculation and

heated controversy. There is nothing on record to show Rajput or even Hindu conquest of Chotanagpur and even the Rajas never made the claim of being descendants of conquerors. The story given by them—the story how a *nag* (snake) that lived in the period of Janmejaya, the great grandson of Arjuna the Pandava, assumed human form and married a *Brahmani* ; how they came to Chotanagpur and died after a son had been born ; how a snake spread its hood over the child and protected him and some Mundas passing by saw the child and brought it up ; how the child, when he grew up, so impressed the tribal people with his prowess and intelligence that they made him their king ; and, finally, how since then the *Nag-banshi* Rajputs have ruled this tract—this story does not deserve serious consideration. Equally fantastic are the stories of the origins of some other Rajas and big landlords of Chotanagpur and the surrounding states—all of whom claim to be blue-blooded Rajputs.

The explanation given by others, though vehemently denied by the Rajas, seems nearer the truth. Among the Mundas who first came to Chotanagpur the prevailing system was that the whole village community jointly owned the land which it had cleared and rendered fit for cultivation. (Even today the system prevails in some parts of Ranchi where the male descendants of the original settlers jointly own the land and pay a nominal tribute (*chanda*) to the Maharaja.) They had the *Pahan*, the village priest and the *Munda*, the village headman (now the whole tribe is called *Munda*), both offices becoming hereditary in course of time. But neither had any rights superior to those of other members of the tribe. With the increase in number, more villages were settled, more land was brought under cultivation and a wider organisation called the *Parha* or *Patti* consisting of groups of villages came to be formed and the headman of the parent village or the oldest and ablest of the Mundas became the *Manki* or Chief of the whole *Parha*. He presided over the *Parha panchayat*, settled disputes etc.

At a still later stage, about the 6th century A.D., one of them became the chief *Manki* of the whole tribe and therefore of the tract where the Mundas predominated. He was the Raja, the leader during wars, and to him certain services were rendered and contributions paid in kind.

The Rajas gradually became Hinduised—one story is that being taken prisoner in a battle one Raja came to see the pomp and splendour of Hindu courts and was highly impressed. They

started calling themselves Rajputs, entered into relation with Hindu Rajas outside and from the 17th century Rajputs and other Hindus began to be brought from outside and made *jagirdars*. Hindu religion began to make headway, temples were constructed but on the whole their tribal life, their social and land systems remained unaffected. Plenty of land lay around, all that had to be done was to clear the jungles, land had not become an article of purchase and sale, and so the concept of private ownership of land was unknown. Forests belonged to all and neither the Raja nor the *jagirdars* ever dreamed of claiming them as private property. This was the situation till the advent of British rule.

This account, as I have already stated, has been vehemently denied by the Rajas and their Juniors who claim that they have lived here as landlords from "times immemorial." But they have advanced little proof except that "in the very suburbs of Ranchi there is a three-century old Hindu temple at Chutia." (*Chotanagpur—A Sanctuary*—published by Landholders Association.) But if those who claim to have come here during the period of the *Mahabharata* cannot produce any evidence stronger than the existence of a "three-century old" temple, then the claim, to say the least, does not seem to rest on very strong grounds.

I have dealt with the subject at some length not only to give an idea of the system that prevailed here till recently but also to bring out certain features of the relations between landlords and tenants. The landlords—not only the big ones who are known as Rajas but also the smaller ones—whatever the racial origin of some of them may have been, are today in their affinities, in their sympathies, in their outlook, almost all non-aboriginal and mostly outsiders—Biharis, Bengalis, Rajputs, Marwaris and others. They consider themselves to be not merely socially superior to the aborigines who are mostly cultivators, but members of a *higher race*; their attitude towards the aborigines is one of unmixed contempt and the vehemence with which they all deny any relationship with the aborigines even in the remote past is a measure of that contempt. The very term used by them and other non-aboriginals to indicate the tribal people, the term *Kol*, has assumed such offensive meaning that any aboriginal today with the slightest education and self-respect feels insulted if he is called a *Kol*. This prevailing animosity is one of the gravest problems that face Chotanagpur.

WHAT BRITISH RULE HAS DONE

We have seen that the aborigines can justly claim to have been the first colonists of the interior parts of Chotanagpur. It was they who cleared the forests, wrested the land from the fangs of the snake and the claws of the tiger. They were divided into a number of tribes—Santhals, Hos, Mundas, Oraons, Kharias etc.—and though wars must have occasionally broken out among them, on the whole they led peaceful unmolested lives, occupying different tracts. Skilful bowmen and adepts in the use of spears and battle-axes, they inspired wholesome respect in the Rajas and *jagirdars* who never sought to interfere with their tribal system, rights and customs. They had no caste distinctions. In their tribal festivals which were many and frequent, everyone, old and young, men and women, freely participated. Their fine manly bearing, their healthy out door life, the utter absence among them of that subservience which marks Depressed Class Hindus, the freedom and equality which their women enjoyed—all these favourably impressed everyone who first came in contact with them. Spirituous liqueur was unknown and the simple rice beer or *Handi* which they used did not seem to affect their health adversely.

This is not meant to be a panegyric on barbarism. There was the other side of the picture—100% illiteracy, ignorance of the most elementary laws of nature and inability to make use of them, witchcraft and other superstitious practices. While the rest of the country attained a high level of civilisation the tribal people here in their forest fastnesses continued to live more or less as they had done thousands of years ago. It was as though time stood still here while it flowed and wrought profound changes everywhere outside.

Civilisation was bound to storm this fastness sooner or later but the manner in which it came and the agencies through which it operated, while they destroyed the old tribal life and with it all that was sound and healthy in it, did not replace them by anything positive. Land which the aborigines had wrested from jungles and cultivated as free men for generations was, by a stroke of the pen, declared to be the property of Rajas and *Jagirdars*. Ignorant of the complicated provisions of the new laws, unable to follow proceedings conducted in a strange language, they did not even know what was happening. Money-lenders made their way in and soon had them in their grip. Hundreds of thou-

sands became landless labourers and had to plough, for miserable wages or as tenants-at-will, the very soil of which they had been the owners. Tens of thousands were uprooted from the soil and scattered in the coal mines and in the tea plantations of Assam where away from their healthy hill tracts they perished like flies. New diseases were introduced, the advent of civilisation meant the introduction of liqueur which played havoc with their health. Some of the larger and more compact tribes retained a sort of emasculated tribal life but without the many customs and festivals that alone could give it a cohesion and a meaning, more and more fell into a state of spiritual apathy, moral degradation and physical decline. They have lost or are losing their languages, their culture, their songs, their dancing, their laughter. Their history during the last 150 years is a history of this tragic process of disintegration and degradation.

It is sometimes stated that aborigines are found in such large numbers in coal and other mining areas and in the tea gardens because they have no attachment for land and are by nature migratory. It has even been alleged that Santhals are particularly fond of such work (*Census Report, Bihar and Orissa, 1931*) ; yet in the same report it is said that Santhals are adepts in the art of reclaiming jungle tracts for cultivation but move away from their fields because "they are averse to the payment of rent."

About the aborigines tribes of Ranchi—Oraons and Mundas—Mr. Reid, the Settlement Officer, said, "They possess deep attachment for their homes and fields.....It is not uncommon to find an Oraon or Munda persisting in cultivating his ancestral fields long after he has been ejected from them by the courts and I have known numerous cases in which individual aborigines underwent imprisonment five or six times for persisting in the attempt to get back ancestral lands. Large numbers of them who emigrate to Assam and the Duars return if they are able to save a little money and buy back the land which they had lost or some land in the vicinity. This in fact is very often the object with which they emigrate." (*Settlement Report, Ranchi, 1902-10.*)

No one should think however that the tribal people accepted their enslavement and degradation tamely. They fought as hard and as long as they could.

AGRARIAN DISTURBANCES OF HUNDRED YEARS

"The history of the Mundas and their country," says Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy in his *The Mundas and Their Country*, "has

been, during the British period, mainly a history of the constant struggle between the descendants of the aboriginal clearers of the jungle and the *Dikkus* or foreign landlords." In almost identical terms the same view is expressed by the Secretary to the Bihar Government in a letter addressed to the Government of India in 1912.

Chotanagpur passed into the hands of the British in 1769. Some years after this, the Permanent Settlement system was introduced recognising the big Rajas as proprietors and conferring on them extensive rights to lands and forests in violation of all existing customs. The attempt on their part and on the part of the *Jagirdars* who now became junior landlords to enforce their newly-acquired "rights" led to serious disturbances in Ranchi in 1789 and it took full six years to suppress the revolt. The Government and the landlords thought this was the end of all troubles. It was only the beginning.

Rents were rapidly enhanced, at one stroke by 35%, money-lenders appeared on the scene charging interest "at the rate of 75% and even more" (all facts, figures and extracts, except when otherwise stated, are from Government publications—District Gazettes and Survey Reports, etc.). Sikhs and Pathans from whom landlords had bought expensive articles of luxury were given leases of land in lieu of payment. "These *Thikkadars* would not permit the cultivators even to have fruits of the trees which they themselves or their ancestors had planted." The *Jagirdars* did not lag behind. "The half-deserted villages which one frequently meets with," wrote the Collector of Ramgarh in 1826, "testify to the oppressive conduct of these people as landlords."

Things reached a head when the *Thikkadars*, not content with all they had done began to take liberties with the women of the aborigines and there were cases of seduction and even rape. The accumulated hatred boiled over. What came to be known as the Great Kol Rebellion began.

Revolts broke out and though they began with the Mundas, other tribes—Oraons, Hos, Santhals etc. joined and "by the beginning of 1832 it had developed into a national crusade with the avowed object of getting rid of the hordes of foreigners that had settled in the country." The whole of Ranchi was up in arms, the Hos of Singhbhum joined, revolts spread into Hazaribagh, Palamau and Manbhum. The Government assembled troops, "three flying columns swept the country from north to south," artillery was brought into action against men who had

nothing but bows and arrows and spears and, after thousands had perished, "peace was restored."

While the tribes of Ranchi were tasting the first fruits of British rule, the Hos of Singhbhum were enjoying their last days of freedom. But their turn soon came. The Raja of Porahat who had accepted the overlordship of the British claimed the Hos as his subjects and demanded rent. Having never heard of such a thing they refused and troops were sent by the British Government to convince them of the claims of the Raja. "These savages," wrote Lieutenant Maitland, who commanded the expedition, "with a degree of rashness scarcely credible, met the charge of the troops half-way in an open plain, battle-axe in hand." Half of them perished.

This did not daunt them and on approaching the first village, the troops were greeted with arrows which inflicted "considerable losses." And "in order to drive them from the shelter" the gallant lieutenant "set fire to the village but still there was obstinate resistance and numbers had to be slaughtered before they could be induced to lay down arms." Other encounters followed and the Hos "suffered equally heavily."

But as the troops pushed into the interior of Kolhan they began to realise that their civilising mission had only begun and in another battle "the major part of one-hundred well-armed" soldiers was wiped out.Flushed with success the Hos then advanced and "ravaged the greater part of the Raja's estate." The expedition ended in a fiasco. Troops armed with modern weapons had failed against the "savage valour" of Hos defending their hearths and homes.

British prestige had to be retrieved, the sacred rights of the Raja had to be enforced and so next year a larger force was assembled, villages were burnt or razed to the ground and at last the Hos were forced to surrender. Within a year there were fresh "disturbances". And in the Great Rebellion of 1932 the Hos fully participated.

BIRSA REVOLT

From time to time various measures were enacted to pacify the aborigines but they were all half-hearted and failed to achieve anything. Discontent continued and also "local disturbances." In 1886 a petition was submitted to the Government of India by the tribesmen of Ranchi in which they "advanced most extravagant claims based on the theory that they were the

aboriginals of the country, that they were not subject to revenue laws." This petition "was, of course, rejected."

In 1895 there appeared on the scene a young man, Birsa Munda, a striking personality and a talented organiser, a man whose memory is sacred to the aborigines of Chotanagpur to this day. As a boy he had studied in the German Mission School at Chaibasa (Singhbhum). Soon after his return to Ranchi, he collected round himself a band of devoted followers and inaugurated a sort of social and religious reform movement. Abo-origines were asked to worship only one God ; to give up their customary sacrifices before a host of *Bangas* or deities. They were to lead clean lives, love, respect and help each other. His teachings, it is said, represented "a queer mixture of Hinduism and Christianity."

Crowds gathered round him in hundreds—and soon—thousands. Wherever he went, miraculous powers of healing were attributed to him ; he came to be known as Birsa Bhagwan. In the existing historic and social background the movement inevitably flowed into agrarian and political channels. Birsa more and more began to talk about the wretched condition to which his people had been reduced and started calling upon his followers to "resist the landlords and defy the Government."

Soon he was arrested along with 15 of his followers and sentenced to two years imprisonment. After his release he returned to the scene but on the issue of a warrant for alleged desecration of a Hindu temple, again disappeared for some time. In 1899 he reappeared, held a series of meetings and the message he gave now was openly and avowedly against the landlords and the Government. Within a short time the whole of Ranchi was aflame, the revolt spread to Singhbhum also. A *Thana* was raided ; one constable was killed, the rest managed to escape. Landlords and policemen were attacked and in some instances missionaries too—over hundred cases of attack being recounted at the subsequent trials. Troops were sent against Birsa's "army". Severe clashes followed. The dead bodies of four women and one child among others were found in the field after one clash.

Birsa was captured but before he could stand his trial, he died in Ranchi jail, the Government says, of cholera. Two of his followers were sentenced to death, the rest to long terms of imprisonment.

Analysing the causes of the revolt the Government says that the movement was "agrarian and political." Birsa "assembled

armed forces not merely with the object of extirpating the landlords but also of getting rid of the British" and "unless the British Government had blocked the way, he would have succeeded in founding a religious sect that would, in a very short time, have embraced the whole aboriginal population of Chotanagpur."

Birsa is remembered today by the aborigines as their great national hero. All of them, Christians and non-Christians, utter his name with love and pride. His picture was prominently displayed at the first session of the Ad basi Mahasabha held in 1939.

LANDLORDS' VERSION

With this version of the agrarian revolts that convulsed Chotanagpur for more than a hundred years, the landlords and their spokesmen do not agree (*Landlords' Memorandum to the R.T.C.; Agrarian Discord in Ranchi*—S. K. Haldar). If one were to believe them, their relations with the tenants had always been cordial and would have continued to be so, if Christian missionaries had not instigated the latter to create troubles. On its very face this theory is absurd—even more absurd than the theory that strikes are engineered by outside agitators. It is undoubtedly true that missionaries in order to win the confidence and goodwill of the aborigines did, on many occasions, support their claims against landlords and even gave them moral, legal and in some instances, material support. But it should be clear to any sensible person that without deep-rooted causes such mighty uprisings—uprisings in which men armed with bows and arrows fought against troops, uprisings in which thousands perished—could never have taken place. Even missionaries were not spared in some instances during the Birsa Revolt. The story of the idyllic relations between landlords and aboriginal tenants being spoiled because of the intrigues of missionaries is too fantastic to deserve serious refutation.

LEGACY OF HATRED

The last armed attempt by the aborigines to regain their lost rights ended in failure but these disturbances of a hundred years have left in their trail a legacy of bitterness, hatred and frustration that persists to this day—for the basic causes that led to them have not been liquidated. The deep hatred that the aboriginal feels for the foreigners who to him means the landlord who has stolen his land, the money-lender who has bled him white, the outsider who has monopolised all the services—this

hatred is a factor that dominates social and political life, especially in the areas where the aborigines preponderate. To ignore this factor and utter platitudes about the need for forgiving and forgetting while refusing to tackle the root causes, as many are wont to do, is to shut one's eyes to realities.

III. The Land Problem

PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

Agriculture is the mainstay of the overwhelming majority of the people and the problems that face the aborigines in this sphere form part of the general agrarian problem of Chotanagpur.

Some twelve Rajas and *Thakurs* who are not ruling princes but only big landlords own the greater part of Chotanagpur including the forests. The rest are mostly Government *Khasma-hals*. Among the Rajas the most important are the Maharaja of Chotanagpur who owns practically the whole of Ranchi district and a large part of Palamu; the Raja of Ramgarh, the Raja of Padma, the Raja of Panchkot, the Thakur of Jaria, and others. Their estates are mostly permanently settled. Under these big landlords there are junior landlords and under them tenants and cultivators of various classes.

The first thing that strikes one is the absurdly low land revenue that these big permanently settled estates pay. A few figures will show this. The revenue that the Government gets from the Ranchi estate of the Maharaja of Chotanagpur—practically the whole district with an area over 7,000 sq. miles—is only about Rs. 15,000 a year. In Hazaribagh the cash rent alone which the landlords received according to the District Gazetteer of over 20 years ago was over 12 lacs of rupees while the revenue paid to the Government was only Rs. 47,000 or less than 4%. "Over and above this the landlords hold extensive areas in their own cultivation and also collect a considerable produce rent." In Palamu the landlords received as rent over 9½ lacs of rupees while the revenue from permanently settled estates was Rs. 25,000 and from temporarily settled estates, Rs. 3,000—in all Rs. 28,000. In Manbhum the total land revenue amounted to Rs. 84,000—"a sum which represents barely one anna per acre of land under cultivation."

Nor is this all. "A high percentage of the most valuable paddy lands" in all districts held by landlords as their 'privi-

leged lands', lands to which no tenancy rights can accrue and which are cultivated by tenants-at-will or agricultural workers. In Hazaribagh and Palamu landlords directly own 30% of the rice lands and the value of the crop in each was nearly 17½ lacs of rupees.

All these figures are many years old and since then while everything else—rents in many cases, the price of rice, timber, lac and other forest produce—has gone up, the revenue remains the same and will remain the same as long as the present land system continues.

Desiring to do some thing about their scandalous state of affairs the Congress Ministry, after a good deal of hesitation, imposed on all landlords in the province a tax of 25% on incomes exceeding Rs. 5,000 a year from landlords' own lands. The measure, however, has not achieved much success—at least in Chotanagpur. It is a tax only on land directly held by landlords and these form only a fraction of the total land. Secondly, it is on a flat and not gradually steeped rate. And finally, it being a tax on *net income* and not on area, it is easy for landlords to evade its provisions and pay far less than they should. All that is needed is to show less produce or false expenditures. This is actually done and done on extensive scale by practically every landlord, a fact which the Government knows quite well.

Besides the income from land and forests, the big landlords in whose estates mines have been discovered, draw additional sums on which of course they have to pay income tax.

“ HAS ALWAYS BEEN, WILL ALWAYS BE ”

Not all the Rajas are fabulously rich. Due to division and sub-division among heirs and even more due to a mismanagement, extravagance and litigation some of them are not as prosperous as these figures might indicate and many of the junior landlords are heavily in debt. But the point to be noted is that out of the sum paid by tenants as rent, out of the yield from landlords' own lands, and out of the forest produce, the Government receives as revenue and tax only a tiny fraction—perhaps, though I cannot say definitely, a lesser percentage than in any other part of the country. This is a serious obstacle, the most serious obstacle a high Government official told me, in the way of realisation of any scheme for the economic and cultural upliftment of this backward tract.

How then, it may be asked, does the Government find money

to meet its expenditures ? Official publications give a shocking answer to this question. One instance will suffice :

In 1917 the total income from Ranchi District was 10 lacs of rupees out of which 6 lacs was derived from excise. "Excise has always been," with revealing candour the District *Gazeteer* says, "and always will be the main source of revenue." No comment is necessary. Since then, I have been told though I could not get figures, hundreds of additional liqueur shops have sprung up everywhere, drunkenness has increased to alarming extent and excise perhaps more than ever, has become "the main source of revenue." It must be stressed here that for their own use, the aborigines are permitted to distil *Handia* or rice-beer and this revenue is derived exclusively from spirituous liqueur or *Daru*—a beverage formerly unknown to the aborigines. So disastrous has been the effect of this on them—on their health, on their morals, on their economic condition that even missionaries who ordinarily support the Government have raised their voice of protest. Even Mr. Heyward, an *Adibasi* professor who seems to look upon the Congress as a greater enemy than the British Government has appealed to it "to sacrifice some revenue rather than place temptation before the simple aborigines" (*Problem of Aborigines*—J. C. Heyward).

But the Government cannot do that. It has to retain the support of the landlords and for that it has to honour the sacred pledge it gave to them more than a hundred and fifty years ago—the pledge never to increase the land revenue. So it finds money by degrading and debauching the people.

The vice of drunkenness is widespread among aborigines. Almost everyone drinks—men, women, and even children. The rooting out of this vice is not an easy task but a beginning has to be made if they are to be saved. And the first step must be the closing down of liqueur shops.

IRRIGATION

The soil of Chotanagpur is poor, the yield per acre is far less than in Bihar proper. It is agreed on all hands, however, that the yield can be substantially increased by means of artificial irrigation. All the rivers and streams that traverse the country are rainfed and any shortage of or delay in rainfall causes severe drought, scarcity and even famine.

Irrigational works are practically non-existent in most places and even where they exist they are totally inadequate. If we

take the three natural divisions in which Bihar falls, we get the following picture :

	PERCENTAGE OF CULTIVATED AREA IRRIGATED (1941)	AREA DOUBLE-CROPPED (1941)
North Bihar	.. 17	27.8
South Bihar	.. 49	24.5
Chotanagpur	.. 10.4	6.7

It should not be thought that no irrigational possibilities exist. On the contrary we have the official view that "immense facilities exist in the numerous rivers and streams" and that "the undulating character of the country would seem to render the construction of bunds and embankments a simple matter" (*Survey and Settlement Report*, Ranchi 1902-10). Same are the possibilities in other districts. Yet, beyond expressing the pious hope that "landlords and cultivators" would together do something, the Government had nothing more to suggest. No wonder all that the Settlement Report of Ranchi in 1927-35 had to say about the matter was that "irrigation is rarely practised, the harvest is entirely dependent on rainfall and the yield from various classes of paddy land" was poor. Naturally the "condition of the people was much the same" as twenty-five years ago.

Equally gloomy is the picture in Palamau—the "driest and probably poorest district in the province," Hazaribagh where irrigational works are "necessary," Singhbhum which is "subject to draught caused by deficiency of rainfall," and Manbhum where "the system (bunds and embankments) seems capable of extension." Thus the need for the construction of irrigation work in Chotanagpur was recognised by the Government many years ago, and also the existence of immense facilities, yet even today such works are conspicuous by their absence. Practically the whole cultivated area is single-cropped.

"JUNGLE FRUITS AND EDIBLE ROOTS"

Against drought and crop failure therefore the cultivator has no protection but that, the Government assures us, is not such a calamity as we would think it to be—at least as far as the aborigines are concerned. Their "physical hardihood is remarkable" and "during crop failures jungle fruits and vegetables of all kinds are a valuable reserve." In Palamau "the aborigines have

a resource in the edible jungle products which enable them to eke out existence in periods of scarcity." In Singhbhum, "in times of scarcity they can subsist on jungle fruits and roots." The only trouble—though not a serious one—is that living on this "diet" is "injurious to health and causes blotches and sores all over the body." (All extracts are from District Gazetteers and Survey Reports.)

As regards the income of cultivators, only the Gazetteer of Palamau (1926) tries to work out figures. The total income from land that fell to the share of 4,20,150 tenants and their dependents was, after the payment of rent, the sum of 40 lacs of rupees which meant that the "sum available per head of the population was between Rs. 9 and Rs. 10 a year." But again that magic remedy "jungle fruits and edible roots" being available and also "subsidiary occupation like lac cultivation, these figures," we are warned, "must not be taken to mean too much."

"TRADITIONS DIE HARD"

In addition to rent the peasants have to pay *Salami* when they want to settle on *Bakasht* land—land that has reverted to the landlord, or reclaim waste land or jungles. There is no fixed rate and the law does not recognise it but since all land belongs to the landlord and cannot be brought under cultivation without his consent, the "practice is of realising a large *Salami*"—much higher than the rental value of the land would warrant because the landlords, many of whom are constantly in debt, want to get as large a lump sum as possible.

As for *Begari* and other forms of feudal services and dues, the exact position today, outside Ranchi District where they are little in evidence, is hard to ascertain. That they were rampant till recently is admitted in Government publications. "The system of forced labour or *Begari* in Palamau District"—says the Gazetteer of 1926—"has been theoretically abolished" by the conversion of "dues and services into small addition to tenants rents" (which as I have shown leaves the tenant Rs. 9 to Rs. 10 a year). "But to this day Palamau is removed but a few steps from feudalism and it would be idle to pretend that *Begari* is no longer taken." The philosopher-like comment is: "Traditions don't die in a day."

In Hazaribagh "the landlord generally controls the labour he requires through the *Kamiauti* system which, at its worst, is little removed from....slave labour." Elsewhere "the *Kamias*

are too ignorant and improvident (!) to fight their own battles. If they show the least signs of independence, they are turned out of their houses and this contingency they will not face. So the matter rests at present."

Whether the "matter rests there" even today and whether "traditions" have died in Palamau, I do not know. It is for the Kisan Sabha to find out.

LAND ALIENATION

Tens of thousands of aborigines leave their lands every year and migrate to coal mines and to tea gardens in Assam. Others become land labourers or tenants-at-will. It is estimated that over 2½ lacs of persons born in Ranchi District where aborigines form over 70% of the population, live outside. I have already quoted official opinion that this migration is not voluntary but enforced.

"The extent of expropriation of the former aboriginal peasant proprietors of the Chotanagpur plateau," says Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, "may be estimated from the fact that when the preparation of the *Record of Rights* of the Ranchi District was at last completed in 1910, it was revealed that out of a total of 3,614 sq. miles of cultivated lands . . . only about one-ninth (400 sq. miles) were left as the 'de-jecta-membra' of the original proprietary rights of the aboriginal reclaimers of the soil and founders of villages." Various tenancy laws have been formed from time to time to prevent land alienation. The last amendment was made by the Congress Ministry which among other things laid down that in case of attachment of the land of aborigines for failure to pay dues only that much land must be put up for sale as would suffice to realise the decretal amount and that in auctions where such attached land is put up for sale, aboriginal bidders should be given preference. These amendments have helped the aborigines but not to the extent hoped. In the first place few aborigines have the money to make even the minimum bid and secondly the law does not prevent what is called "voluntary surrender" of land by the tenant to the landlord—a surrender not at all difficult for the landlord to obtain if he so desires—the surrendered land then becoming the *Bakasht* land of the landlord, land on which he can settle anyone he likes. It is the Catholic Mission that seems to have gained most from these amendments in the Tenancy Act. Their Co-operative Bank buys up a good portion of the lands put up for sale through aboriginal bidders

and this gives the Mission an additional weapon for conversion and for extending its influence. This is what is happening in Ranchi. I do not know how the Act has worked in other districts.

Another kind of land alienation has been going on for a long time throughout Chotanagpur—land passing into the hands of Marwari money-lenders through sale by indebted landlords. They have already acquired vast tracts and their conduct as landlords is much more oppressive than others. While legally they possess no more rights and powers than other landlords—being money-lenders, landlords and grain merchants, all rolled in one—their real power is far greater. They are easily the most hated section among landlords.

GOVERNMENT'S HYPOCRISY

The British Government has always claimed to be the protector and champion of the aborigines. It was on the basis of this claim—as I shall show later—that they justified the partial exclusion of Chotanagpur from reforms. To what extent this claim is justified can be seen from the following resolutions of the Adibasi Jamin Bachai Sabha of which De Meulder, a Roman Catholic priest, is the Secretary and the replies of the Government of Bihar (May-Aug., 1944) :

Resolution : The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act should be so amended without delay that no further aboriginal lands be put up for auction sale for arrears of rent but that arrears of rent, if any, should be realised by attachment and sale of crops.

Govt.'s. Reply : After careful consideration of the question, the Government has come to the conclusion that a change in the law on the above lines will not be in the interest of tenants (!) and will be unfair to the landlords whose entire estates are liable to be sold for arrears of land revenue of even a single *Kisht*.

Resolution : Amendments should be made in the Tenancy Act that henceforth no oral or written consent of landlords be required for conversion of waste land into *Korkar* by the settled *Ryots* of the village. Only the consent of both the Village *Panchayat* and the D.C. be required.*

Govt.'s Reply : The provisions of the Tenancy Act, as now amended, are considered to be sufficient.

*Such amendment would deprive the landlord of the right to impose a heavy *Salami* when waste land and jungles are brought under cultivation.

Similar are the replies given by the Government to resolutions praying for construction of irrigation works, removal of grievances about forest rights, special facilities for scholarships etc. Even the request for the undertaking of a scheme of colonisation so that aboriginal families, preferably those of soldiers, may settle with occupancy rights and payment of nominal *Salami* on waste lands and in uncultivated areas was turned down by the Government on the plea of "practical difficulties."

CHEAPER COAL VS. BETTER MOTHERS

And so despite the assurance of the Government that "as in the past the grievances of aborigines will continue to receive their sympathetic consideration" (Aug. 1944) the process of uprooting the aborigines from the soil continues. As for those who because of this "sympathetic consideration" are forced to seek work in coal mines, about their present conditions of living, work and wages, I could not get facts. We all know, however, that the wages are miserably low and that underground work for women was re-introduced in defiance of public opinion and in the face of universal condemnation.

On this subject a letter from Mr. Sutherland, the Acting Secretary of the Indian Mining Association appeared in the *Statesman* of June 26, 1945. He warns that reintroduction of the ban would "affect the war-effort, for output would drop by 20%." Moreover, there is no need for it either because "the women themselves prefer being below with their husbands." They all belong to the "primitive tribes" and the work is "suited to their physique," one to which "they have been accustomed for generations." Those who obstinately maintain that such work is harmful for the health of the women are informed that "those acquainted with the heat of Indian summer must agree that there is something to be said for the comparative coolness below the surface."

So underground work is suited to the physique of aboriginal women, it enables them to be always with their husbands and, moreover, the mines are a sort of Darjeeling for them. One wonders why the solicitous Mr. Sutherland should go out of his way to tell us in the very next line that "the industry shares the dislike of women working underground" and why he should not boldly champion the perpetuation of a system which is so beneficial—not to the "industry" of course but—to the women and their husbands.

Faced with the alternative of choosing between cheaper coal and better mothers—as a Catholic priest has aptly said—they choose cheaper coal.

DESTRUCTION OF FORESTS

Once covered with thick jungles and forests, Chotanagpur has now been practically denuded. This denudation has been far more extensive than the increase of population and the consequent reclamation of jungle tracts would warrant. Opinions differ as to who is mainly responsible for this. Mr. Reid, the Settlement Officer (1902-10) thought that the most important reason was that “several of the landlords look upon jungles as a providential asset to be exploited for the payment of debt” and proceeded to say that the facilities afforded by the opening of railways had resulted in a “more thorough deforestation than the present needs or even wanton destruction by all the *Ryots* combined”. Others, among them Mr. Taylor, the Settlement Officer in 1927-35, thought that more destruction is caused by tenants than by landlords.

The real truth seems to be that landlords who own most of the forests give them to contractors who cut down trees mercilessly, in many cases infringing the customary rights of the tenants and the latter, afraid that soon they would be left with nothing to build their huts and construct fences, cut down and carry away more than they immediately need. In this tug of war, forests disappear with incredible rapidity. This process which has been going on for many years has been enormously accentuated during the war and the consequent rise in the price of timber and other forest products. Soon a time may come when the aborigines will have to buy even fuel from the market and even jungle fruits, the one reserve on which they fall back in periods of scarcity, will vanish.

This denudation has caused extensive soil erosion and is reducing the fertility of an already not too fertile soil. It has not merely adversely affected the climate of Chotanagpur but has made the plateau a source of danger to its neighbours. On more than one occasion extensive damage has been caused to the coal fields below and to the adjoining districts of Bihar by heavy floods—occurrences directly traced to the destruction of forests in Government reports. Even this year (1945) heavy floods occurred in the Sone in July perhaps due to this very factor.

What prevents the Government from taking measures to pre-

vent this criminal destruction which not merely further impoverishes a population already living on the verge of starvation but also imperils the life and property of the people below? Nothing but the sacred rights of private property. Forests belong to the landlords and so nothing can be done except half-hearted measures, measures which have been proved to be futile, and attempts to "induce" landlords to be sensible "in their own interest." A Government conscious of its responsibilities to the land and its people would have long ago taken steps which without infringing the customary rights of the people, would preserve the forest. But that the present Government cannot and will not do. For it nothing is more odious than the violation of the sacred rights of private property.

EFFECTS OF THE LAND SYSTEM

The land problem not merely vitally concerns the aborigines who are mostly cultivators, it lies at the heart of the whole Chotanagpur problem. The landlord-tenant relation—the landlords all "foreigners," the aborigines almost all cultivators—acquires here the form of a racial conflict that vitiates the whole political and social atmosphere. Thanks to the prevailing land system the Government is robbed of tens of lacs of rupees. This system makes the undertaking of any serious scheme of irrigation, of cultural upliftment and physical well-being extremely difficult. It reduces the people to a state when for months they have to subsist on jungle fruits and roots with disastrous consequences to their health. It has created a situation in which people are degraded and drunkenness encouraged so that revenue may not fall. It condemns not merely the aborigines but the whole of Chotanagpur to a permanent state of backwardness, a state of things which provide ideal soil for the breeding of animosities and for imperialist machinations and intrigues.

IV. Land Of Darkness

The five most backward districts from the point of view of literacy in the provinces of Bihar and Orissa were, in 1931, "in the order of demerit"—as it was put—Palamau, Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Champaran, Santhal Parganas. Of these five, no less than 4 lay in Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas.

The position in 1941 was :

<i>Literacy per cent in Bihar as a whole</i>	..	9.2
In Palamau	..	5.6
„ Hazaribagh	..	6.1
„ Ranchi	..	8.4
„ Manbhumi	..	10.0
„ Singhbhum	..	11.2
„ Kolhan Subdivision in Singhbhum where aboriginals preponderate	..	7.0
„ Santhal Parganas	..	7.2

With the exception of Singhbhum where the Tata Iron Works have drawn a large literate population from outside and Manbhumi where Bengalis preponderate, literacy figures in Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas are lower in every district than in the province as a whole. In Ranchi where aborigines form 70% of the population the figures are not so low due to the large Bengali and Bihari population in the town and also due to the educational activities of missionaries among aborigines.

Figures showing the extent of literacy among aborigines alone are not given in 1941 tables. A memorandum submitted to the Statutory Commission by the Bihar Government in 1936 stated that "in the matter of education, the aborigines in the province in 1931 are, as a whole relatively to the general population, in a worse condition than in 1921." Among the adherents of tribal religions who in 1931 numbered over 24 lacs and constituted half the tribal population in the plateau, the number of literates was 64 in 10,000 or .64%.

During the Census of 1941 an attempt was made to prepare a "sample table" from figures collected over a wide area which included Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas. Of 27,483 aborigines only 782 were literate—less than 3%. The Mass Literacy Committee of Bihar worked in an area in Santhal Parganas where aborigines—Santhals and Paharias—form 90% of the population. In this area only 175 out of 18,470 were literate—less than 1%.

In the states where aborigines preponderate the literacy figures are very low. In the Chhattisgarh Agency States they number over 70% and the percentage of literacy in the whole population is 2.7 In Surguja, the largest of these states, it is less than 2.

The aborigines, therefore, form the most illiterate section of the people and this backwardness of theirs has been one of the most important factors in keeping the whole of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas in a state of cultural and political backwardness. The task of liquidating this is a difficult and complex task and involves the overcoming of peculiar obstacles but it has to be undertaken if Chotanagpur is not to be condemned to a state of permanent backwardness.

The major tribes in Bihar and Orissa that have retained their own languages were, in 1931, the following :

TRIBE				POPULATION
Ho	..	..	..	5,23,158
Kharia	..	..	..	1,46,037
Khond	..	..	..	3,15,709
Munda	..	..	..	5,49,764
Oraon	..	..	..	6,37,111
Santhal	..	..	..	17,12,133
				38,83,912

The rate of increase in the aboriginal population is higher than in others and though the Census tables of 1941 do not give the relevant figures, the total population of these 6 tribes today must be in the neighbourhood of 45 lacs. Of these tribes, the Khonds live in Khondmahal in Orissa, the others mostly in Chotanagpur, Santhal Párganas and in the adjoining states of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Gangpur, Bonai and Chhattisgarh States Agency. Among the languages they speak, Santhali, Kharia, Ho and Mundari bear close similarity. Oroan, I am told, resembles Telegu and other languages of the Dravidian group.

It would be wrong to think that these primitive languages are dying out. On the contrary, between 1921 and 1931 the number of people speaking them as their mother tongue increased by 5,77,000 or nearly by 18%. The 1941 tables give no information on this matter but there is no reason to believe that the increase has not been maintained.

None of these languages has a script. The biggest difficulty in the way of spreading education among aborigines is that they have to learn everything in a language—generally Hindi—which is not their own. The missionaries who were the pioneers in this matter adopted the Nagri script and Hindi was the medium

of instruction in Chotanagpur proper. In Santhal Parganas the Roman script was adopted and in a number of schools Santhali was taught. One of the demands of the Adibasi Sabha has been that primary education should be given to aboriginal boys and girls in their own languages.

The job is not simple. It involves the training of teachers, the preparation of primary text books and a host of other difficulties. But I cannot see how the appalling illiteracy among aborigines is to be liquidated if from their very childhood they have to acquire education in languages which are not their own.

The Bihar Mass Literacy Committee which was formed during the regime of the Congress Ministry and has continued work ever since, has done valuable pioneering work in this sphere and its experience can be a useful guide. The method adopted by it has been to give lessons in the Nagri script—in Roman in Santhal Parganas—and *in their own language* to the aborigines for a period of three months and after that elementary lessons are given in Hindi to those who desire to continue their studies (they mostly do). I was told that the method has achieved striking success and the aborigines, including women in some places, generally considered to be averse to the acquirement of education have shown keen desire to learn. In Kolhan (Singhbhum), one of the most backward areas, over 13,000 Hos have been made literate during the last two years. Due to paucity of funds and other war-time difficulties like shortage of kerosene, the work has suffered but it continues to be remarkably successful wherever it is undertaken.

While aborigines form the most backward section of the people illiteracy and general cultural backwardness is by no means confined to them. In Palamau where they number no more than 35%, less than 6 in 100 of the total population is literate. The condition is little better in Hazaribagh where aborigines number 27%. With the exception of Manbhum (and Singhbhum for reasons indicated earlier) the whole of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas form a backward tract—a veritable land of darkness.

V. Political Set-Up

I have given in broad outline the history of Chotanagpur and tried to bring out some of the features of the problems that face it. Having no other materials except these in the nature of bald assertions not backed by facts and figures, I have had to rely

almost exclusively on Government publications. Some of them are many years old and the facts and figures they contain may, in some respects, be out of date. But the general picture is one about which there can be no two opinions. The greater part of Chotanagpur has been and is a land of social degradation, of economic impoverishment, of cultural black-out. The backwardness of the aborigines has given the stamp of backwardness to the whole land.

It is in this background that the separatist movement has grown. It is easy to ascribe it to the machinations of missionaries and it is a fact that Christian aborigines have played a leading part in the movement. But the basic causes, as I have shown, lie deeper.

In Ranchi District where aborigines number 70% of the population not more than 6 lawyers in 100 are aborigines. They are as poorly represented in the medical profession. In the police force they form a tiny fraction and that too almost exclusively in the ranks of constables. In the mines they are almost all unskilled workers. In all Government services, except a few of the lowest grade, they are conspicuous by their absence. In commerce and industry they are nowhere. In the towns they are normally labourers, domestic servants and rickshaw pullers. The spectacle that meets one in the streets of Ranchi—Biharis, Bengalis, Marwaris and others comfortably reclining in rickshaws pulled by aborigines—this spectacle vividly depicts the state to which the children of the land and its original inhabitants have been reduced.

It is argued that this is inevitable because aborigines are by nature unintelligent and improvident and suitable men from among them are not available for responsible jobs. The Government when asked to reserve a fixed percentage of services of aborigines replies that they cannot do that “at the cost of efficiency” (Aug. 1944); on the other hand aboriginal leaders level the charge that even suitable and qualified candidates are almost invariably ignored in favour of non-aboriginals. Whatever may be the truth in individual cases, it should be clear to all that unless a fixed percentage of vacancies are reserved for aborigines and as long as the Public Service Commission does not contain a single aboriginal and the recruiting is done by heads of departments who are all non-aboriginals, justice will not be done and misgivings will continue. It is only responsibility that trains a person and the argument about efficiency, we all know, is used

by imperialism to justify exclusion of Indians from responsible posts. Today in Chotanagpur that very argument is used by our own countrymen to justify exclusion of aborigines from services.

And so the festering sore continues, the air is thick with distrust, hatred and animosities smoulder beneath the surface, imperialism steps in and utilises the genuine discontent of aborigines for its own ends.

This is no mere conjecture. It has happened in the recent past. It threatens to happen again.

PARTIAL EXCLUSION FROM REFORMS

Formerly Chotanagpur was part of Bihar for all purposes. The Simon Commission, on the basis of whose recommendations this area was partially excluded from the Reforms of 1935, discussed the subject in Paras 87 and 88, Vol. I of its *Report*. They are paras that deserve careful study. They bear eloquent testimony to imperialism's capacity for intrigues and hypocrisy.

"The primitive tribes" in this backward area, the *Report* says, "amount to 58% of the population of the plateau (the Kurmi Mahtos about whom I have written earlier were included) and they *nurse a resentment against the Hindu immigrants who, as they consider, have robbed them of their ancestral lands.*" And so "the five districts of Chotanagpur together with the district known as Santhal Parganas and Sambalpur (now in Orissa) are *partially excluded from Reforms.*" This meant that though these areas "should continue to return representatives to the Bihar and Orissa legislatures, the *Governor, as the Agent of the Governor General in Council will decide how far legislation enacted at Patna should apply to them.*" It was stressed that "the administration of these areas, as of other backward areas, will rest with the Government of India who will act through the Governor."

As for the representation of these and other backward areas in the proposed Federal Assembly, they were to be "*directly represented through nomination*"—the procedure being that the Governor General should nominate eleven members to represent the backward tracts, because "it is most desirable that their requirements should be put forward by persons qualified to speak with knowledge on their behalf" (Para 144, Vol. II).

In the para preceding the one recommending separation, a casual reference was made to the enormous mineral wealth of Chotanagpur.

The extracts speak for themselves. They need no comment. They reveal the outline of the policy that imperialism has been pursuing. And in executing that policy they have a powerful ally in the Christian missions.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

It is well known that these recommendations owed their origin to missionaries and especially to the Catholic Mission who were afraid that popular ministries might not encourage their proselytising activities. They are a powerful force in Chotanagpur, especially in the dominantly aboriginal areas, the number of Christians in the districts being :

Santhal Parganas	..	..	23,205
Hazaribagh	..	..	2,593
Ranchi	..	..	2,85,205
Palamau	..	..	10,786
Singhbhum	..	..	17,775
			3,39,564

Missionaries are active in the adjoining states also ; in the states of Gangpur and Yashpur they have over a lac of adherents.

Among the missionary organisations, the Roman Catholic Mission of Belgian Jesuits is by far the best organised and the most powerful. Through its colleges and schools, many of the latter in the interior parts of Ranchi, through its Co-operative Banks and dispensaries and in manifold other ways, it exercises influence far beyond its flock of adherents. Between 1931 and 1941 the number of Christians in Chotanagpur increased tremendously—in Hazaribagh by 50%, in Palamau by 31%, in Singhbhum by 24%, in Santhal Parganas by nearly 100%. Ranchi of course is their stronghold. The Catholic Mission rigidly controls all activities of its followers.

Christians are easily the most educated section not merely among the aborigines but in the population as a whole.

As for the politics of the missionaries and particularly of the Catholic Mission, there is no doubt that theirs was the single biggest influence in partially excluding Chotanagpur from the Reforms. They are violently anti-Communist. In a lecture

delivered in Hazaribagh in October 1944, Father Demeulder, one of the most active and influential missionaries in Chotanagpur, fulminated against the "autocrat Stalin" who broke the pledge given to Poland because "the Polish Government insisted on talking through the Red Cross organisation of the 10,000 murdered Polish officers whose corpses lie in Katyn forest." He warned the aborigines against the "Godless ideas of Communism."

No less do they hate the Congress although they are not so outspoken as far as the Congress is concerned. They consider the aborigines their special preserve and would oppose tooth and nail any "outside influence" securing a footing among the aborigines.

That they and other missionary institutions have done valuable work among the aborigines even their bitterest critics cannot deny. Whatever progress the aborigines have made has been due largely to their work. Their influence is the result of years of painstaking constructive work, but it is an influence which seeks to isolate the aborigines from the general national movement and therein lies its reactionary role. There is little doubt that any move on the part of the British Government whose object is to exploit the discontent of the aborigines for isolating Chotanagpur from the social, political and religious influence of the rest of the country, will have, as in the past, powerful backing from the missionaries, especially from the Catholic Mission. It is a readymade weapon which imperialism can always make use of.

Except in Manbhum where it is strong and led by Gandhites, the Congress in Chotanagpur is very weak, especially in rural areas. Muslims are mostly weavers or Mominis ; both the League and the Momin Conference claim to have their backing. What the real position is I cannot say. The Muslim intelligentsia is overwhelmingly pro-League. But both the League and the Congress are extremely weak, far weaker than in any other part of Bihar.

THE ADIBASI MOVEMENT

Some forty years ago, Mr. (now Rao Sahib) Bandi Ram Oraon, Theble Rao and some others formed an Oraon-Munda Shiksha Sammelan in Ranchi, collected money for propagating education among aborigines and for uplifting them socially. Not much came out of the project as quarrels broke out among the sponsors, and, it is said, the money was misappropriated. In 1914 a society called Unnati Samaj was formed with Rev. Jewel Lakra

as Secretary. Its main object was the winning back of aboriginal land. Petitions were submitted to the Government, campaigns were carried on, members were enrolled and for a time the organisation became quite strong. It was recognised by the Government as the representative organisation of the aborigines of Ranchi.

This organisation was led by members of the Lutheran Mission and though its leaders were mostly Christians, its membership was open to all aborigines. The Roman Catholic Mission which by 1930 had become a powerful force did not approve the idea of its members joining the Unnati Samaj, and it started an exclusively Catholic organisation—the Catholic Sabha. Their motto was, *Pro fide et patria*—serve your country according to your faith or religion. It preached social reform, temperance, control of the dowry system and also the need for spreading education and for undertaking land reforms.

Before the formation of the Catholic Sabha and almost simultaneously with the Unnati Samaj, another movement had grown—the Tana Bhagat movement. It was confined to non-Christian aborigines of Ranchi and began as a social reform movement—worshipping of one God, personal cleanliness, abstaining from intoxicants etc. Under the impact of the Non-Co-operation movement, it got politicalised and “adopted an attitude antagonistic to the landlords and hostile to the Government” (*Survey Report 1927-35*). The Tana Bhagats came completely under Congress influence, preached Charkha, temperance and the settlement of disputes by *Panchayats*. Attempts were made to “force the Government to introduce agrarian reforms.” They refused to pay rents. Action was taken against them, many were sent to jail; lands were confiscated.

Tana Bhagats have continued to be staunch supporters of the Congress, especially of Gandhiji. In all subsequent Congress movements they have participated and suffered. They are said to number a few thousand but their influence today is very little. Among educated aborigines their strength is practically nil.

The Unnati Samaj and the Catholic Sabha continued to exist side by side till 1938. A sense of Adibasi consciousness was in the meantime growing and the need for a single political organisation was being felt. Profound changes were taking place in the country. Congress ministries had been formed and the Unnati Samaj proposed the formation of a single Adibasi Mahasabha to fight for the political and economic demands of all Adibasis irrespective of the religion they followed. The Catholic Sabha held

out for some time but the urge for unity in its own ranks grew too strong and the Sabha decided to liquidate itself as a political body and permit its members to join the proposed Adibasi Sabha, while retaining itself as a social body.

The first session of the Adibasi Sabha took place at Ranchi in 1939 under Jaipal Singh as President. Christians and non-Christians joined to make the session a success and from all accounts it was a great success as a demonstration.

As an organisation the Sabha has little existence outside Ranchi and even in Ranchi it has not even an office. Among its leaders the most important is Jaipal Singh—a man who, almost everyone agrees, is an unprincipled careerist. He was sent to England, while quite young, by missionaries and there he acquired a university degree and won fame as a sportsman—he captained the Indian Olympic Hockey Team that visited Europe. Later, for some time he worked in the Burma Oil Company and then returned to Chotanagpur where thanks to his aboriginal birth—he is a Munda—his foreign degree and his demagogic powers, he blossomed into the undisputed leader of the Adibasis almost overnight. His reputation is most unsavoury. He encouraged the aborigines of Gangpur State to withhold rent, took from them Rs. 8,000 on the assurance that he would right the wrongs done to them and then let them down when repression started, their leaders were arrested and fire was opened in which several were killed (1939). He flirted with Subhas Bose for some time while the latter had broken away from the Congress and formed the Forward Bloc. Now he is busy recruiting aborigines for the Army for which he is heavily paid. He is altogether a man without principles, without morals, (his wife is seeking divorce from him) without integrity. But even now he is by far the most powerful man in the Adibasi Sabha and wields great influence among the aborigines.

Among the others, the most important are Julius Tigga, the General Secretary who runs a school and seems a very honest person ; Paul Dayal, a lawyer who was the Chairman of the Municipality ; Rao Saheb Bandi Ram, a non-Christian who is now inactive ; Mr. Boniface Lakra, a lawyer who is very sincere and honest but not much active seems to have little following. None of these junior leaders seems to like Jaipal Singh but none would dare to oppose him openly.

From its very inception the Sabha has been bitterly anti-Congress. They say the Congress Ministry did nothing for the

Adibasis. Not only that. During the District Board elections in Ranchi where the Congress and the Adibasi Sabha opposed each other (the Adibasi Sabha won the majority of seats it contested in rural areas) lathi charges were made on aborigines. Further, the demand for a degree college in Ranchi was turned down and the grants given to missionary educational institutions were reduced, thereby harming the aborigines.

The argument that the Congress was in power for too short a period to do much, that even then they amended the Tenancy Act in accordance with the suggestions made by Adibasi leaders themselves, does not seem to remove their distrust about the *bona fides* of the Congress. And they point out that even during Congress regime no irrigational works were undertaken, no efforts were made to meet their grievances about services etc.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that the Adibasi movement is purely missionary or Government sponsored. Reactionary influences have undoubtedly been at play, but as I have tried to show, there are genuine grievances, genuine causes for distrust and the forces of reaction can be defeated only by tackling the basic causes. Failure to do that and merely cursing the Government and the missionaries will lead us nowhere and strengthen the very forces we desire to weaken and destroy.

The war has quickened the growth of consciousness among the aborigines. Tens of thousands of them have joined the Army and the WAC (I)—Chotanagpur has contributed more men to the Army than any other area in the province—and there they have acquired new self-confidence, new self-respect. Their horizon has broadened ; they are straightening their backs and lifting up their eyes. Gone are the days when they could be content with their lot as hewers of wood and drawers of water. This revolution in the outlook of tens of thousands is already a fact, a fact which the national movement can ignore only at its peril.

VI. The Slogan Of Separation

The central political slogan of the Adibasi Sabha is that of separation of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas from Bihar and their constitution into an autonomous province. The arguments advanced by them in favour of separation are :

1. “Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas together constitute a dominantly aboriginal area essentially different from

Bihar proper ethnologically, geographically, geologically, linguistically, culturally and economically."

2. "The unequal and improper combination of the inhabitants of these comparatively backward areas with the advanced people of the plains of Bihar with different culture, language, history, race, custom, habits and land tenure has been, is and will be detrimental to the welfare and progress of these aboriginal tracts."

3. These areas are not merely different in every respect from Bihar but also themselves form "a compact area bound together by racial, linguistic, cultural, historical and agrarian bonds."

4. This "distinctive unity" had been recognised by the Simon Commission itself.

(Resolution adopted at the first session of the Adibasi Sabha in 1939.)

Before discussing the separation issue itself and the results that separation is likely to achieve, I shall examine some of the arguments advanced in their resolution.

DISTRIBUTION OF ABORIGINALS

The Adibasis form 45% in Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas. But their distribution in this area is by no means even, as the table given below shows ; all castes and tribes under "Primitive Tribes" have been classed together irrespective of the religions professed by them :

DISTRICT AND SUB-DIVISIONS	APPROXIMATE POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF ABORIGINALS
SANTHAL PARGANAS	22,34,000	11,29,000 50.5%
Deoghar	400,000	96,000
Dumka	509,000	345,000
Godda	417,000	178,000
Jamtara	272,000	146,000
Rajmahal	356,000	188,000
Pukaur	277,000	174,000
HAZARIBAGH	17,51,000	4,78,000 27.3%
Sadar	839,000	240,000
Chatra	263,000	82,000
Ciridih	648,000	154,000

PALAMAU	..	..	9,12,000	3,23,000	35.4%
Daltonganj	..	..	719,000	187,000	
Latehar	..	..	193,000	135,000	
RANCHI	..	..	16,75,000	11,73,000	70%
Sadar	..	..	638,000	384,000	
Khunte	..	..	390,000	272,000	
Gumla	..	..	388,000	302,000	
Simdega	..	..	258,000	213,000	
SINGHBHUM	..	..	11,44,000	6,68,000	58.4%
Sadar (Kolhan)	..	..	611,000	442,000	
Dhalbhumi	..	..	533,000	226,000	
MANBHUM	..	..	20,32,000	678,000	33.3%

If we compare the number of aborigines with Hindus, Scheduled Caste Hindus and Muslims in the various districts we get the following tables :

CHOTANAGPUR AND SANTHAL PARGANAS, NUMBER PER 10,000				
	<i>Scheduled Castes</i>	<i>Other Hindus</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Aborigines</i>
Hazaribagh	..	832	5,212	1,196
Ranchi	..	117	2,405	464
Palamau	..	1,142	4,337	934
Manbhumi	..	562	5,332	651
Singhbhum	..	175	3,472	377
Santhal Parganas	..	568	3,183	1,176
Chotanagpur &				
Santhal Parganas	562	4,007	831	4,565

It can be seen that in Chotanagpur it is *only in the districts of Ranchi and Singhbhum and in the Latehar Subdivision of Palamau* that the aborigines number more than all others put together. In Santhal Parganas they are a bare majority. In the Dhalbhumi Subdivision of Singhbhum they form a minority but that is largely because of the influx of outsiders into Jamshedpur where Muslims and Sikhs alone number 51,000.

There is no doubt that a high percentage of the Scheduled Caste people in Hazaribagh and Palamau are of aboriginal stock but they have today become completely Hinduised, and are not

classed as aborigines. Among the tribes classed as aborigines too a very large number, nearly half according to the *Census Report* of 1931, have, to a great extent, become Hinduised. The Kurmi Mahtos who number nearly 7 lacs are no longer, as I have stated earlier, classed as aborigines.

LANGUAGE

Manbhum occupies a unique place not only in Chotanagpur but in the whole province of Bihar in that it is the only district where Bengali speaking people form a clear majority, 65% of the total population. Out of 19 lacs of Bengalis in Bihar no less than 12 lacs lived in Manbhum in 1931, by far the biggest concentration of Bengalis outside Bengal. The district is geographically contiguous with Bengal. Even many of the tribal people have been completely "Bengalised."

In Hazaribagh where the aborigines number 27.3% Hindi is the language of over 75% of the people—Hindi known as Magahi and spoken in large areas of Bihar. In Palamau district as a whole non-aboriginals preponderate and Hindi or Magahi is spoken by over 75%, many of the tribal people in Daltonganj having been completely Hinduised. In Dhalbhum Subdivision of Singhbhum Bengali is the language of 36%, tribal languages are spoken by 36% and 11% speak Oriya. In Santhal Parganas where they number over 11 lacs and form 50.5% of the population, aborigines mostly speak their own language, though many of them have learned Hindi and Bengali and some have adopted these languages completely.

The picture that Chotanagpur presents is thus an extremely diverse one. The statement that the districts constituting Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas are "bound together by racial, cultural, linguistic" and other bonds cannot be substantiated by facts. We have here different races, different religions, different languages, different cultures. Geographically the whole plateau including states forms a natural division and the agrarian laws are uniform but these are not the most important factors.

WHAT SEPARATION WOULD MEAN

The question of separation of Chotanagpur stands, therefore, on a footing quite different from that of the separation of Andhra and Karnatak. Out of the 6 districts that constitute Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas, one—Manbhum, is culturally and linguistically Bengali; two—Hazaribagh and Palamau, domi-

mainly Hindi ; two—Ranchi and Singbhum, dominantly aboriginal ; one—Santhal Parganas, half aboriginal, half Hindi and Bengali. We have here common backwardness, also the common feeling that this backwardness is the result of the step-motherly attitude of the Bihar Government, and therefore, common hatred of Biharis—hatred which is not confined to aborigines but is shared by Kurmi Mahtos, by Bengalis and by many other non-aboriginals who have made Chotanagpur their home. But no common language, no common culture, no common consciousness of common destiny. Nor does there seem any likelihood of this common consciousness growing after separation. If anything, the contrary is likely to happen.

The Bengalis, who predominate in Manbhum, also form an important element in the Dhalbhum Subdivision of Singbhum—36% and in the Santhal Parganas, especially in the parts adjoining Bengal. In Ranchi and to some extent in Hazaribagh, while their numbers are not large outside the towns, they are an important and influential section. Their attitude towards the aborigines with whom they have nothing in common is no different from that of Biharis, and if today many of them support the demand for separation, it is entirely because they hate the Biharis and feel that with the hated Bihar Government's control gone, they—the Bengalis—will more than ever boss the show. The Bengalis of Manbhum would like their district to be part of Bengal but if that be not immediately possible, they would support the idea of its being in a separated Chotanagpur. Nor is the basic attitude towards the aborigines on the part of others—Hindus and Muslims—quite a number of whom are vocal about separation, any different.

Besides the Adibasi Sabha another organisation exists—the Chotanagpur Separation League, a curious assortment of diverse elements. Its leaders are Mr. Devaki Nandan Sinha—the former Counsel in the Meerut Case, Promode Choudhury—a leading lawyer of Ranchi, Khan Bahadur Ahmad—a Muslim Leaguer who sometimes flirts with the Royists and is known to be an opportunist, and others. Most of them—though not all—are anti-Congress.

It is not improbable that if today a plebiscite is taken, the majority—the aborigines, the Kurmi Mahtos, the Bengalis and many of the Hindus and Muslims—would vote for separation. But out of the divergent and, in many cases, mutually antagonistic elements of Chotanagpur a single nationality cannot be forged.

And a separated Chotanagpur will inevitably be a house divided against itself. These now joining in the demand for separation will fall out the day separation is achieved and the conflict which today vitiates the political life will not disappear but intensify. The worst sufferers will be the aborigines themselves.

It must not be forgotten that non-aboriginals form 55% of the population and it is they who own all the land, all the industries and mines and dominate every sphere of life. Even if universal suffrage were to be introduced and all aborigines were politically conscious, their representatives would form a minority in the Chotanagpur Legislature and today under a restricted franchise their proportion would be far less. The Legislature will be dominated by non-aboriginals and mostly by reactionary vested interests, thanks to the political backwardness of the tract and the weakness of the Congress, a weakness which will compel the Congress to seek the support of reactionaries and in many cases, nominate them as Congress candidates. The tasks without the carrying out of which no real improvement in the condition of the aborigines and of Chotanagpur as a whole is possible—the task of destroying the antiquated land system and as a first step towards it of imposing a heavy land tax ; the task of compelling the mine owners and industrialists to concede human conditions of work and living ; the task of enabling the aborigines to obtain a just share of the services—these tasks can never be carried out by such a legislature.

But that is not the only factor to be taken into consideration. In their hatred against the Congress the Adibasi leaders often tend to forget that the bulwark and in many cases the creator of the vested interests that have ruined the aborigines has not been the Congress but the British Government. It is the British that introduced the obnoxious land system that has reduced the aborigines to their present state. It is they who drowned the agrarian revolts in blood, not hesitating to use artillery against bows and arrows. It is they whose spokesmen—all Europeans—have the shamelessness to declare that an income of Rs. 9 a year is sufficient for the aborigines as they can subsist on jungle roots.

It is they who encourage drunkenness and moral and physical degeneration so that their revenue may not fall. It is they who in the teeth of popular opposition re-introduced underground work for women to aid those who prefer cheaper coal to better mothers. It is they who even today refuse to take mea-

sures against land alienation for they cannot be "unfair to the landlords." It is they who refuse to reserve any percentage of the vacancies in services for aborigines on the plea that that would mar "efficiency". Their claim to be the protectors and champions of the aborigines is a claim based on hypocrisy, chicanery and lies, a claim that not one fact can substantiate.

And for them a separated Chotanagpur will be a veritable paradise. Powerful vested interests—British and Indian—are already entrenched here. A land of vast mineral resources, a land torn by animosities, a land of cultural and political backwardness, a weak Congress, a powerful Catholic Church—what more could imperialism desire?

It is believed that the British Government is favourably inclined to the idea of separation and that informal assurances to this effect have already been given to Jaipal Singh. Whatever may be the basis for this belief, such a thing would not be surprising. It would be a continuation of the same policy that led to the partial exclusion of Chotanagpur from Reforms.

Separated Chotanagpur will more than ever be the back-water of reaction, a place where reactionary forces will flourish. Skilfully utilising the aboriginal-non-aboriginal conflict—a conflict which will not disappear but intensify, sometimes backing this section, sometimes backing that, playing one against the other but never tackling the basic problems for on their perpetuation depends their very existence. It will be imperialism and its allies that will always have the whip hand and the consequences will be dire for aborigines, for non-aborigines, for the whole country. Some of the Adibasi leaders may become ministers, some of them may secure jobs. But the condition of the vast masses will not improve, for that demands a death blow against the antiquated land system and against the power of the vested interests. And imperialism cannot and will not strike that blow. If the history of Chotanagpur during the last 150 years proves anything, it proves this.

A SEPARATE ADIBASHISTHAN ?

To merely decry the separation movement, however, as most Congressmen do, is not enough. The demand is not merely anti-Bihari or anti-Congress. There is a genuine positive urge—the urge among Adibasis for a separate homeland of their own, a land which will have modern industries, modern methods of agriculture, schools, colleges, hospitals but where at the same time all

that is healthy and sound in their customs and practices will be preserved and revitalised, a land where their distinctive culture—their languages, their folk lore, their songs, their dances will flourish and enrich the whole country, a land which they can call their own, a land of which they are the masters.

Such a land Chotanagpur, where the aborigines form a minority, cannot be. But if we take those areas in Chotanagpur where they form a majority and the adjoining states we get the following table :

TERRITORY	APPROXIMATE POPULATION	TRIBAL POPULATION
A. Ranchi	16,75,000	11,73,000
Singhbhum	11,45,000	6,69,000
Latehar	1,93,000	1,35,000
Saraikala and Khasrwan	2,05,000	1,10,000
Mayurbhanj	9,91,000	7,14,000
Gangpur	3,98,000	2,98,000
Bonai	92,000	56,000

Chhattisgarh Agency States :

Changbhakar, Korea,

Surgoja, Udaipur

and Yashpur

	10,42,000	7,31,000
Total	57,41,000	38,86,000
B. Santhal Parganas	22,34,000	11,29,000
	79,75,000	50,15,000

In the contiguous area (A) the aborigines or Adibasis form over 67.7 % of the population. (The aboriginal belt extends deep into the Central Provinces—I could not get the relevant figures—where they numbered 30 lacs in 1931) This tract including the northern part of Keonjhar State where they preponderate can be a genuine Adibasisthan—the land of the aborigines. But that demands the abolition of native states and the sweeping away of the artificial barriers that divide the aborigines of Chotanagpur from their brothers in the states. Such unification of the

Adibasis in a homeland of their own—a genuine homeland—cannot be achieved without the destruction of British rule and the attainment of national freedom.

It will be seen that out of 38.86 lacs of aborigines in tract (A) no less than 19 lacs or nearly half live in the states. Their conditions in almost every respect are worse than even in the provinces, a fact which literacy figures alone bear-out.

A criticism that is bound to be made is that the two aboriginal tracts—A and B—will have no geographical contiguity. This would be a valid criticism but I don't see how it can be overcome. Exchange of population would obviously be out of question for lacs are involved and moreover Santhal Parganas have been, for long, the homeland of Santhals. The only practical course seems to be to include the Santhal Parganas in the Adibasisthan as an autonomous unit (the Adibasisthan will have to be a confederation of autonomous units of territories of Hos, Mundas, etc.) though it has no geographical contiguity.

A RETROGRADE STEP ?

It may be argued that the creation of a separate Adibasisthan as a unit of the Indian Federation will be a retrograde step and would perpetuate the backwardness of the aborigines. The process of assimilating them linguistically and culturally by Bengal, Bihar and Orissa has been going on for many years ; they are fast losing their distinctiveness which is nothing more than a relic of backwardness and that process should be continued and accelerated till Adibasis or aborigines as such cease to exist and they all become Bengalis, Biharis or Oriyas as the case may be. In support of this policy it is further argued that Adibasis themselves do not form a single nationality—they are divided into various tribes who speak different languages and so Adibasisthan itself can never be a unit.

This view does not seem to me to be based on facts. While an increasing number of aborigines are learning to speak Bengali, Hindi and Oriya, they are also retaining their own languages and the number of people speaking these languages is increasing with the increase of tribal population. Between 1921 and 1931 the number of people speaking these languages increased by 5,77,000 (1941 figures are not available). Nor has the growth of education among aborigines obliterated their distinctiveness. On the contrary in the district where this growth has been the most striking (Ranchi) not merely does the distinctiveness per-

sists but it has even become a matter of pride. No longer do educated aborigines look down upon their distinctive culture as a relic of barbarism, something of which they need be ashamed.

I had a demonstration of this when I visited a school founded and run by Julius Tigga, General Secretary of the Adibasi Sabha. The teachers, both men and women, are all aborigines. They could have easily secured good jobs of which there is no dearth these days. But at nominal wages they serve in this school which as yet gets no grant from the Government. The huts where the classes are held have been built by the teachers and students themselves. In the school which is a co-educational institution boys and girls are not merely taught reading and writing but dances and songs are also encouraged. I witnessed songs and dances in which not merely students—both boys and girls—but also Mr. Tigga, a graduate of the Patna University, participated. Such a thing would, perhaps, have been unthinkable a few years ago.

It is true that aborigines speak different languages but between the majority of languages they speak in Chotanagpur—Ho, Mundari, Santhali and Kharia—there is close similarity ; and between tribes and the others there is a lot in common as regards customs, practices and social system. They fought shoulder to shoulder during the rebellion of 1932. Birsa Bhagwan is the common hero of the tribes of Ranchi and the adjoining districts. Out of this common suffering, a sense of Adibasi solidarity has been growing. A new consciousness has grown, especially among the more advanced aborigines, an Adibasi consciousness, a consciousness that does not obliterate but transcends tribal divisions. Tribal distinctiveness persists but as the relation between the tribes has never been that of exploiters and exploited, masters and slaves, tribal animosities are little in evidence.

A separate Adibasisthan, therefore, which itself must consist of autonomous units seems to me to be a practical possibility. It will satisfy the urge of the Adibasis for a homeland of their own without infringing the rights of others ; without running counter to the legitimate demands of others.

The Adibasi movement, the movement for the cultural, material and political progress of the aborigines and for a homeland of their own comes up against the same obstacle that stands in India's way to freedom—the obstacle represented by British Imperialism ; and therefore, this movement must become an integral part of the national movement for freedom and democracy.

The homeland which the Adibasis can win in co-operation with the national movement will be a genuine homeland, a homeland where brother will unite with brother, a homeland where the Adibasis will be the masters. The pseudo-homeland which they can get by setting themselves in opposition to the national movement and in co-operation with their opportunist allies of today and as a favour from imperialism will be a separate Chotanagpur, where animosities will burn as fiercely as today and British and other vested interests will hold sway.

VII. Tasks Today

The question of an autonomous Adibasisthan can be taken up seriously only after the attainment of national freedom and the abolition of princely autocracy. But there are problems that have to be tackled here and now. Hitherto the relation between the Congress and the Adibasi movement has been one of hostility and mutual distrust. They have pulled in opposite directions. This has happened despite the fact that the Congress stands for national freedom, freedom without which the Adibasis, worst sufferers under British rule, cannot improve their material and cultural conditions and political status. This has happened despite the fact that the Adibasi movement strives for the social and political upliftment of Adibasis, upliftment which can immeasurably strengthen the national movement, upliftment without which the whole of Chotanagpur despite its vast resources, is bound to remain as it has remained till now, a backward area, a drag on the national movement, a happy hunting ground for imperialism.

It is now no secret that the British Government is striving to use the aborigines and their discontent exactly in the same way as it has used the Scheduled Classes and other minorities. Numbering 2½ crores in the country the aborigines are an extremely important factor in our national life and can become either an asset or a powerful weapon for disruptive purposes. So far as I know, hitherto no attempt has been made by the Congress to effectively counter the activities of reactionary forces among them. This indifference and apathy has to go.

And Chotanagpur with its large aboriginal population affords a unique opportunity. By tackling the problem here the Congress can win the support and sympathies of the aborigines not merely in this tract but in the whole country.

Indications of what is in store if this is not done are not

lacking. During the Simla Conference, telegrams were sent by several organisations and leaders demanding a seat in the Executive Council for the aborigines. These must be taken as the danger signal.

It may be that today so deep is the distrust that Adibasi leaders have for the Congress that any argument against the separation of Chotanagpur which has become for them an article of faith will be looked upon as an attempt to evade the issue. But after talks with a number of Adibasi leaders I have come to the conclusion that if genuine efforts are made not in words but in deeds, the Congress will be able to reduce their distrust and gradually liquidate it.

The tasks that face the Congress, the Muslim League and other progressive organisations in this area are :

1. *The rooting out of the racial animosity that poisons the atmosphere.*
2. *The upliftment of this area as a whole—materially, culturally and politically.*
3. *Preservation and development of the distinctive languages and cultures of the aboriginal tribes.*
4. *Enabling the aborigines to lead a human existence and secure their just share in the services and in the wealth of the land.*

For all these purposes Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas must be treated as a special area, with its own special problems. What the aborigines and other backward people expect to gain as the result of separation, must be realised now.

I shall now indicate the lines on which measures should be taken.

L A N D :

1. Amendment of the Tenancy Act in the light of the experience of last 7 years with the object of closing all loop-holes.
2. Drastic revision of the whole land system for ending the Permanent Settlement system. This may not be immediately possible and therefore a steeply graduated tax must be imposed on all land holdings above a minimum acreage (not above a minimum net income as at present). The tax so realised to be spent exclusively for the upliftment of Chotanagpur.
3. Extensive irrigation works to be undertaken. Full utili-

lisation of all natural possibilities, enlisting co-operation of villagers themselves for this purpose.

4. Settling of tenants with full occupancy rights on waste lands. Abolition of *Salami*. Abolition of the system of landlords' privileged lands.
5. Adequate provision for colonisation of waste land by returned soldiers and their families.
6. Measures for debt relief.
7. Taking over of all forest lands by the Government and their preservation while ensuring full enjoyment of customary rights of villagers.
8. Expenditure of a part of the Government income from mines for the upliftment of this area, and especially for the improvement in the condition of miners..

C U L T U R A L :

9. In the light of the experience of the Mass Literacy Committee elementary lessons to aborigines in their own languages wherever possible. Extension of education in all districts.
10. A Government Degree College at Ranchi in both Arts and Science. A special Department in the College for researches and education in aboriginal history, language, folklore, songs, dances etc.
11. Medical and Agricultural Schools. Facilities in the form of stipends for aboriginal students in the mining school at Dhanbad, in the Patna Medical College, and for technical education in general.

S E R V I C E S , E T C . :

12. Reservation of at least 50% of vacancies in Government services of all grades in Chotanagpur for aborigines. Representation of aborigines in the Public Service Commission.
13. Minimum wages and proper living conditions in the mining areas. Banning of underground work for women.
14. Closing down of liqueur shops. Campaign against drunkenness.

These are a few measures which every progressive element can support. There is nothing "revolutionary" about them. They are the minimum measures necessary for liquidating the backwardness of Chotanagpur and for winning the confidence of the vast number of aborigines who live here. They must be sup-

ported today by unequivocal declarations and campaigns and given effect to whenever the Congress forms a Ministry.

A lot can be done even today in the way of spreading of education in co-operation with the Mass Literacy Committee, constructing irrigational works by enlisting the support of villagers, counteracting the drink evil etc. Also in the way of liquidating racial animosity by removing social disabilities from which aborigines and Depressed Class Hindus who form large sections in Hazaribagh and Palamau suffer.

The war has undoubtedly quickened the growth of consciousness among the aborigines. But it has also created grave problems. Thanks to the influx of soldiers, especially in Ranchi, venereal diseases have increased alarmingly among aboriginal women, and through them among men. A number of cases have occurred of troops, entering villages and raping women. Bengalis and Biharis who mainly form the Congress here are absolutely apathetic towards such occurrences, because aborigines, they think, belong to a sub-human species ; and one gentleman went to the length of telling me that thanks to these aboriginal women, "our" women have been mostly spared. This is a matter which must be immediately taken up by Congressmen and others.

In formulating concrete schemes and carrying them out, the Congress must seek the co-operation of the Adibasi Sabha. Thereby it will win the support of all honest Adibasi leaders and weaken those who desire to stir up hatred against the Congress.

The problem has to be tackled in right earnest and at once. If this is not done, an already bad situation will worsen, Chotanagpur will remain a festering sore in our body politic, imperialist vested interests will have free play in this area so vital for the development of our whole country.

If on the other hand the problem is tackled with boldness and vision, the Congress will win the confidence and support of not merely the aborigines and other backward peoples of this area but also take a big step towards drawing the vast mass of aborigines who live in this country in the national movement and thereby give a death blow to imperialist machinations and intrigues. Under the impact of radical changes in Chotanagpur, the people of the dark states adjoining it will wake up and the whole system of feudal exploitation will be undermined.

As for the aborigines of Chotanagpur, by actively supporting the Congress and by being drawn in the national movement, they will for the first time since the advent of British rule, be

enabled to lead a life of human dignity, uplift themselves and become the pioneers and leaders of the movement for a genuine Adibasisthan, a valued and worthy member of the Indian Federation.

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